THE GREAT GALILEAN

ROBERT KEABLE

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BY

ROBERT KEABLE

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Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our feverish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

Drop Thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!

JOHN G. WHITTIER

PREFACE

I THINK the conclusion, in August 1927, at Lausanne, of the World Conference on Faith and Order gave me the necessary impetus to write this little book. I had been so long removed from close contact with orthodox Christians that I did not realize that there still existed in the world four hundred so famed and so reputed learned men of so many churches who could sign, unanimously, conclusions so reactionary and illiberal as those of this Conference. I had not thought that there was room for such a book as this. It seems to me now that there is not only room, but a call.

I write designedly and definitely for ordinary Protestant men and women who are interested in religion but have never had either the time or the opportunity for much study of it. It may seem to them a startlingly revolutionary book. If so, I shall perhaps startle them still more in this Preface by saying that there is hardly a line of it that is new.

These facts about the earthly life of Jesus have been known for a generation, if these inferences have not been all drawn. They have been not only known, but published — learnedly and theologically in dozens of heavy volumes such as Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, popularly and cheaply in such little books as Dr. S. D. McConnell's *The Confessions of an Old Priest*, which deserved wide publicity and never got it. But the truth is that the happy phrase has not yet been coined, the psychological moment has not yet been found, and the public has therefore not yet been generally awakened to the startling knowledge set out here by me in my turn. When all these things happen, there will, I believe, be a movement in the Western world which will far outshadow the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and will have untold consequences in the East.

I say this deliberately. If this knowledge should strike the world's imagination cataclysmically and at once, I tremble to think of the fate of the man who should be the cause of it. He would happily not realize what he was in for until too late. But if he believed these things to be true, what else could he do but

dare the storm? But the realization may come slowly, in a thousand years, as the knowledge that the earth moves round the sun and not the sun round the earth has come to the popular mind. Then there will be no hailing of one prophet; there will have been a thousand.

One last word. This is not the first religious book that I have written. Because it must happen that some of my earlier readers will read it, however few, I want to say something to them in advance. It is useless for me to beg them not to read it, but, as passionately and as earnestly as I can write the words, I entreat them to believe that not less than heretofore I desire to write the truth and nothing but the truth, that I give my whole heart and allegiance to the spiritual side of things, and that I revere and love our common Master.

R. K.

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THE GREAT GALILEAN

I

THE HISTORICAL CHRIST

No man knows sufficient of the early life of Jesus to write a biography of him. For that matter, no one knows enough for the normal *Times* obituary notice of a great man. If regard were had to what we should call, in current speech, definitely historical facts, scarcely three lines could be filled.

Moreover, if newpapers had been in existence, and if that obituary notice had had to be written in the year of his death, no editor could have found in the literature of his day so much as his name. Yet few periods of the ancient world were so well documented as the period of Augustus and Tiberius. But no contemporary writer knew of his existence. Even a generation later, a spurious passage in Josephus, a questionable reference in Suetonius, and the mention of a name that may be his by Tacitus — that is all. His first mention in any surviving document, secular or religious, is twenty years after.

We do not know with anything approaching historical certainty of whom he was born, or when, or where; how long he lived, or how long he labored; and the sayings which are indubitably his are a mere handful. The stories of his reputed resurrection are so contradictory and confused that it is impossible to make more than a guess at their true import. If the question of his ever having lived at all is not very seriously open to doubt, at least it has been possible for a Swedish professor within the last few months to make out a perfectly good case for the supposition that he was born a century or so before the accepted date.

Yet Lives of Christ are poured forth on the world in ever-increasing volume. The most cursory examination of publishers' announcements in Europe and America shows that something calling itself a Life of him is published nearly every month. Hidebound conservatism, blind devotion, and greed combine to produce them. They combine into what thus becomes almost a conspiracy to keep hidden the real truth that there does not exist enough historical evidence to produce a biographical sketch, let alone a Life, of him.

To our forefathers such statements would have seemed wholly ridiculous, but then our forefathers happily believed that there existed the records of four eyewitnesses — of eyewitnesses, moreover, who had sat down independently to write four Lives of Christ while the actual facts were fresh in their minds. They believed that the prophet Ezekiel had foretold such witnesses, and that the four Living Creatures of that prophecy were the four Evangelists. The prophetical language was held to be typical of the Gospel contents, and thus mediæval crucifixes had often, in their four corners, the symbols of an ox, a man, a lion, and an eagle. These were regarded as the four independent witnesses who upheld the Story of the Cross. Though forty separate days out of a ministry of at least four hundred is all that the Gospels have stories for by the greatest stretch of the imagination, and although all Christ's recorded sayings in them might, if read with due gravity and emphasis, take six hours, still this at least constituted a mine of unquestioned value.

The age of the eighteenth century intervenes as an age of doubt, but the conflict then was

largely regarded as one of common sense against supernaturalism. Men doubted the story of Christ because it was a miraculous story, and, a priori, miracles were supposed to be impossible. There are still reverberations of that controversy among us, but on the whole science has brought before the eyes of our generation so many indubitable miracles that we have come to feel it daring to assert that anything is obviously impossible. But meanwhile a much more insidious and vital attack has been made upon the old orthodoxy, an attack made with little waving of banners or beating of drums, which, despite calumny and prejudice, must be admitted to be victorious.

The average man, however, for reasons upon which we shall enter later, is still largely unaware of the grounds for this attack. Setting aside the profoundly religious man who normally approaches the New Testament with the spectacles of tradition and rigidity upon his nose, the average man does not read his Gospels with anything like close attention. He therefore even misses the most obvious fact which gave the early critics their first cause for doubt. He misses the fact that if Matthew, Mark, Luke,

and John were not bound up together in one volume, and if we did not read that volume with the story they have to tell already arranged in our minds, it would appear that there were literally two stories rather than one. John's Life of Jesus Christ, considered as a biography, is simply a different account from the story of the other three. It is not true to say that it does not set out to be a Life of him, comfortable as that assumption would be, for it begins with his birth, works through his ministry, and ends with his death and resurrection as do the others, but only theological twisting of this wholesale nature can make it the same story.

John has none at all of the other stories connected with the birth; in their place he says, *In the beginning was the Word*, and, *The Word was made flesh.* Jesus in this biography steps upon the historical stage at his baptism, and moves forward to a ministry which involves personalities and incidents which are not even mentioned by the others. It is scarcely too strong to say, as one turns the pages, that the Jesus of John is moving upon a stage so wholly different from the stage of the others that without preconceived ideas we should not know it for

the same stage. We should imagine that it must be written of some other Jesus and some other generation. Thus, Jesus chooses Philip and Nathanael; he makes water wine at Cana of Galilee; he discourses with Nicodemus; he meets the woman of Samaria; he heals the nobleman's son; he cures the infirm man at the Pool of Bethesda; he makes long sermons on himself as the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, the Light of the World, and the predecessor of Abraham; he pardons the woman taken in adultery; and, finally, he raises Lazarus from the dead — the most important keystone incident, as a result of which the drama draws to its climax, for from that moment the Jews resolve to kill him. All these persons and incidents appear only in John's story of Jesus. He talks at length in the upper room before his arrest, but does not institute the Holy Communion; and he dies on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, whereas the other Jesus was slain on the fifteenth. His resurrection is in a curiously theological story by the Sea of Galilee, and the conclusion of this Gospel tells us nothing of the Ascension, but has a defiant and apologetic air, as if its author knew it might be called in question.

For all these persons and incidents in the commonly accepted biography of Jesus there is but one authority and not four, and, to put it mildly, if this one authority has read the story correctly, then the others have read it incorrectly. The ingenuous theory that John wrote later what he meant to be a supplementary Gospel born of the wisdom of old age will not cover the facts. The main difficulty is a much bigger one. Not only does the whole story, considered as a story, turn on the pivot of the raising of Lazarus, which incident the others do not relate, — as if one historian of the Great War should make it originate with the incident of Sarajevo and the others should entirely omit that murder, — but the figure of Jesus as seen through the eyes of John is, to an unprejudiced reader, simply not the figure of the other three.

Orthodox theologians have obscured the importance of this issue for the average man. They have fought to conceal it or minimize it. They have said that it was only after a period that the full nature of Jesus was evident to Christian people, and that John wrote in the light of the later vision and not of the earlier. This is too specious to carry much conviction to the

modern reader. The fact obviously remains that if Jesus, for example, turned water into wine at Cana of Galilee, there is only one witness in the world who says so, and he a witness who belongs to an age which did not regard the manufacture of such incidents as dishonest, and who had the best of subtle theological reasons for discovering this one.

The biographer of Christ who would thus approach his subject in a perfectly impartial and completely disinterested historical manner must set upon one side the witness of John. Compare an historian who is trying to write the Life of Alfred the Great. He might relate the story of the burning of the cakes, but he would not put it in the same category as the actual fact of the crowning of Alfred as king. He would say, "This is a pretty story which has passed into popular legend and may, perhaps, serve to illustrate the character of the man, but it would be unjust to relate it as sober history." That is the attitude which a sober biographer must take toward the Gospel of John.

But if one support to the Story of the Cross is thus withdrawn, what of the three that would appear to remain? It was early observed that

practically the whole of Mark was included in Matthew and Luke, so that very shortly the situation had to be faced that Matthew and Luke, or the authors we call by these Gospel names, had undoubtedly sat down to write with this book before them, and chose to use it rather than their own recollections of the story. Two of the three witnesses thus become, at least in the main, plagiarists and elaborators of the third rather than independent witnesses. And the difficulty does not stop there. In the first place, it is now almost beyond question that the Mark which we have is only a much later edition of the Mark which they copied, and an edition, at that, which has been edited by biased men who were out to prove a case by such editing. It would be of enormous value if the original Mark could come into our hands, but as the years go by the possibility of this becomes more remote. For example, that the original Mark did not contain the greater part of the last chapter of our present book is vastly more than a guess, and what it did contain must probably remain forever an insoluble mystery.

The second great difficulty for the searcher after purely historical facts is that Matthew and

Luke plainly did not sit down with only an original Mark before them, but that they had also another document, equally hopelessly lost to us, which scholars for convenience have agreed to call "Q," from the word *Quelle*, the Spring or Origin. It is entirely outside the scope of a little book like this to enter upon all the arguments for and against the existence of "Q," which have made a wordy war for a generation. The average layman, however, who wisely accepts the opinions of experts in such practical matters as the health of his body, is foolish if he ignores them in such matters as this, and it is all but generally accepted by experts that when Matthew and Luke agree together, sometimes even verbally in the very face of Mark, they are quoting from this lost document which may well be the primary source of the world's knowledge of the life of Christ. And although the document is lost, its tentative reconstruction, which is possible from the others, provides us with a picture of fascinating interest.

This document would show that there was not in the original any account whatever of the birth of Christ. It begins with the coming of the Baptist, with the baptism of Jesus, and with the

Temptation. Its main bulk is made up of what we know as the Sermon on the Mount, and a collection of proverbs and sayings of the Fowls of the Air, of the Lilies of the Field, of the City set upon a Hill, and of the Easy Yoke. It contains but two or three miraculous stories, and those of healings which are the most easy for us moderns to understand. Such difficult stories as of the miraculous finding of the exact tribute money in the fish's mouth, and of the raising to life of the definitely dead, do not appear to belong to it. And it concludes curiously summarily with the sayings of the Coming of the Kingdom like lightning from the East unto the West, and the enigmatical utterance, *Behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*

The question of these Gospel witnesses has thus become a peculiarly difficult one already. Instead of the picture of some original Matthew who sat down independently of everybody else to write a biography of which he was brimful of information, we have the picture of some theologically-minded Jew, who labored before the dawn of what we understand as historical science, sitting down at a littered study table to compile

from all available sources a Life which should fit in with his own preconceived prejudices and beliefs. There are a thousand straws floating on the wind to confirm such an impression as this. To take two such, the original Mark wrote of Jesus on the cross that the Roman soldiers followed the usual custom of Roman execution and gave him to drink in his agony of wine mingled with stupefying myrrh. But the Psalmist had foretold of a suffering Messiah that he should be mocked with bitter gall, and Matthew, writing up the story, deliberately crosses out Mark's myrrh and substitutes the prophetic gall. The original Mark makes a man approach Jesus with the question, *Good Master, what shall I do . . .* ? Matthew, with his own view of the person of the Master uppermost, deliberately alters the question. He makes the man say, *Master, what good thing shall I do . . .* ? Trifles such as these show the absence of a strict historical sense, and must make us more than dubious of much longer stories.

For example, where was Jesus born? There are obvious indications that the crowd of his own day thought that he originated in Nazareth of Galilee, but the Old Testament prophet had said

that out of Bethlehem in the Land of Judah should come the Governor who should be Shepherd of his People Israel. To what extent was Matthew influenced by this when he quoted the Old Testament and commented upon it, *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa?* He goes on to elaborate his statement with the remarkable story of the three kings, which presents a host of difficulties to the modern investigator. Here is an elaborate Oriental story, unknown to secular historians, and even to all other New Testament witnesses (but which would beautifully fulfill a saying of an ancient Hebrew psalmist), of the arrival in a Roman province of an extensive Eastern caravan, following a miraculous star and guided by dreams, which throws the local court into confusion and sets the religious leaders of the people speculating, and which presents the most costly gifts, of which we hear no more, at some lowly house, possibly even at a stable. From what source did this compiler of a Life get his information? We do not know. Why had nobody else anything to say on the subject? We do not know. Why did the meticulous Luke keep silence about it, although, with an intriguing cool precision, he

explains how Mary and Joseph happened to be in Bethlehem at all? Again we do not know. But it is impossible not to feel that we are in an atmosphere amazingly remote from that of sober history. The thing may be as Matthew says, but there is simply no sufficient evidence to warrant a biographer in our time relating it as a fact.

One has, of course, to add to all this a circumstance which perhaps weighs more with the layman than with the expert, but the layman has a right to remember that the cleanly printed and neatly bound little book which he buys for a few pence at the bookseller's does not by any means give a fair impression of the condition of its original sources. The oldest copies are represented by less than half a dozen manuscripts scattered throughout the world, hardly one of them complete, and all of them copies dating from, roughly, some four hundred years from the time of Christ. They can be read only with extreme difficulty, and from their tattered pages the orderly story which we know can only with extreme patience be deduced. More than this, they are admittedly none of them in the original language. Even in this state in which we have

them, they have not only passed through innumerable copyists, of whom there is no evidence that they were accurate in a modern sense, but also through the hands of translators, of whom there is no evidence that they perfectly understood the finer shades of the language they were translating.

This last is a point of really great interest which is worth illustrating here as bearing on so much of what will follow in later chapters. Jesus is generally accepted as our instructor in petitionary prayer, for did he not, in the Lord's Prayer, teach us to say, *Give us this day our daily bread?* But he probably spoke in Aramaic, and the Aramaic would admit of a version of the Lord's Prayer which contains no definite request to God at all. It might have run: "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed is thy name. Thy kingdom is coming. Thy will is done on earth as it is in heaven. Thou givest us day by day our daily bread. Thou forgivest us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. Thou dost not lead us into temptation, but deliverest us from the Evil One. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

Of all these things the average man has no knowledge whatever, and he is the victim, in point of fact, of a well-intentioned but nevertheless perfectly definite conspiracy. The original discoverers of these difficulties in Gospel translation had no desire whatever to make their knowledge popular. They had indeed very strong reasons for the contrary. The more they kept their knowledge confined to the study, the less virulently would the hostility of the orthodox break upon them. They too, in point of fact, were afraid of how the multitude would act if once it doubted the story of Jesus. We can in a sense compare this to the story of evolution. It seemed to the early Darwinists that the ascent of man from the lower forms of life was a discovery so revolutionary that it had better be kept to the learned until it was proved beyond a doubt; and even to-day, although there is practically no eminent biologist who does not accept some evolutionary theory, we have, in Tennessee, the spectacle of a state which is simply afraid of what would happen if it were generally known.

Thus there is to-day an enormous vested interest concerned with keeping doubts of the historicity of Jesus from the knowledge of men

in the street. It ramifies from bishops and archbishops to popular journalists and cinema operators. There is money in Lives of Christ — they help to fill the churches. It is possible to go into a theatre and see the Life of Jesus Christ in moving pictures set forth as if there were as much historical evidence for it as there is for the life of Julius Cæsar or Napoleon. Eminent writers such as the late Dean Farrar have filled up the gaps in the story with a vast parade of Jewish customs and geography, and have harmonized the Gospel difficulties out of sight. Eminent poets have sung the story with a complete disregard of the question of its historical truth. And little children commence life by turning over the pages of some Life of Jesus Christ in pictures, whose authors apparently compiled their books with a glorious indifference to any of these things.

There is, however, one modern tendency which rather interestingly bears out all this. We have had lately a flood of Lives of Christ all of which see in him some new and momentarily arresting portrait. Some of them are almost bizarre in their portrayal. Thus one of the most recent finds in Jesus the prototype of the modern

American business man, and maintains that an advertising convention might well accept him as the originator of the methods of modern advertisement! Moreover, the curious thing is that the case as set out is not so easily denied. One can read the book soberly and say at the end, "Well, there is something in that!"

But the only reason why there appears to be something in it is because, as a matter of fact, there is nothing in it. The historical outline is so incredibly vague and sketchy that anything can be made of it. The more sober biographer simply cannot reconcile all the conflicting stories. He is bound to pick and choose. In this age there is no competent authority to tell him what to pick and choose, and the result is a thousand Lives of Jesus which depict a thousand Christs of a thousand individual preferences.

We are thus left with the still arresting conclusion that it is not possible to write, in a strictly historical sense, a biography of Jesus. We do not know with anything like the assurance that we know other facts of history even the more necessary details for a Life of Christ. Our upbringing or our education may lead us to dwell for other reasons with more or less insistence

upon the possible historicity of this or that series of statements in the Gospels, but if we would maintain the rôle of sober historians keeping strictly to proven facts, there is almost nothing to be said. The earthly life of Jesus Christ is a golden legend.

II

THE TRADITIONAL CHRIST

The truth of the shadowy nature of the story of Jesus considered as a history has also largely been obscured from us by the fact that there has been born into the world a traditional Jesus who has come almost wholly to obscure, and very largely to displace, the shadowy historical Jesus. In point of fact, the traditional portrait of Jesus was preëxistent to the historical and literary portrait of him by many years. The Gospels were not written, as many suppose, to convey the details of the life of Jesus to the world, but they were written to provide confirmation of and support to a more or less diffused and vague knowledge of him which Christians already possessed. This point is very well illustrated by the Epistles of Saint Paul. These Epistles were written many years before the Gospels, so that the great Apostle, writing to his converts of the early Gentile churches, was not writing to men who

possessed a written and alleged historical biography of Christ at all. They had no book to which to refer, but nevertheless Paul thinks it quite unnecessary to relate even one of all the miracles which Jesus performed, even one of all the parables which he spoke, and mentions but one of all his disconnected utterances, as recorded in Acts — *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* Curiously, that one never got into our written Gospels at all. From the Epistles alone we could gather no more of the life of Jesus than the bald statement that he was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven — few enough incidents for a biographer! But the biographer was considered unnecessary. Not only did Paul apparently consider that what Jesus *was* was more important than what Jesus did or said, but also he apparently presumed that a sufficient biographical knowledge was already possessed by his converts.

It was when the world did not, as the early Christians imagined that it would, come to a speedy and cataclysmic end that the Gospels came to be written. They were written to prevent men from forgetting rather than to teach

them. They were not written by cool historians anxious to preserve facts so much as by ardent theologians anxious to support theories. That in a sense they were inadequately and sketchily written, from an historical point of view, is due to the fact that the theories were so widely accepted. Pauline Christianity, in other words, held the field. The traditional Christ already dominated the Christian world.

It was this traditional Christ that held undisputed sway in the minds of men before the invention of printing and the Protestant Reformation. To us who are inheritors of the tradition of that Reformation, it is difficult to realize to what extent this was so. But a mediæval Christian was just as confident that Anna was the grandmother of Jesus as he was that Mary was his mother, although Anna belongs to the traditional and not to the literary portrait of Jesus at all. He was just as confident that Veronica wiped the face of Christ on the way to the cross as he was that Pontius Pilate sent him there, but Veronica belongs to the traditional and not to the literary portrait of Jesus. Although these and many other illustrations may seem trivial, the main details of the life of Christ

were also traditional and Pauline rather than historical and literary.

Here indeed we enter upon a slightly more controversial field, for fragments of the narrative can be construed into the support of this traditional picture. This is natural, because the delineators of the later literary portrait had the traditional already forming in their minds. But thus the mediæval Christian thought that the main work of Christ on earth was the formation of an organized visible Church, of which the apostles and their successors, the bishops, were established as rulers, over whom he had ordained Peter and his successors in Rome, and to which he had personally committed seven sacraments by which the soul of a Christian man could be redeemed from the power of the Devil and conveyed in safety to Paradise. To mediæval men Christ was primarily the Divine Champion in an age-long conflict with Satan, and was chiefly concerned with theological questions of sin and damnation and of grace and salvation.

This traditional Christ was accepted by the Church as, practically, of more authority than the literary, and, when challenged, as of equal

authority with him. Thus the Council of Trent — and the Roman Catholic Church ever since — deliberately states that the traditions are of equal authority with the writings of the Church, and thereby establishes an interesting and well-nigh impregnable position. It is, of course, even possible that the Church as a corporate society does remember a great deal that it was not possible or convenient to write down, but at any rate this hypothesis shifts the whole field of conflict. For the Catholic believes in the Church on grounds which are outside those of literary and historical study altogether. For other reasons altogether, he believes that the Church is a living miracle of the Holy Spirit. Thus, when his Church asserts that Jesus was born without human fatherhood, of an immaculate, ever-virgin Mary, who had no other children, and who gave birth to her one child without the usual pains of motherhood, he does not believe it because of fragmentary and disputable texts which may or may not assert it in so many words; he believes it because the Church says it. On other grounds altogether, he believes that the voice of the Church is the voice of God, who alone has knowledge of these things. If

the Church asserts officially to-morrow that the mother also after her death was assumed to the Throne of God, he will equally believe this, although there is not a vestige of support for it in the written story.

Now, while all this is common knowledge to Protestants, we remain extraordinarily blind to its results. Protestantism has increasingly thrown over much of this traditional cargo, but the fact remains that the story of Jesus which the ordinary Protestant man in the street accepts as historical is not historical at all, but traditional. It is a traditional Jesus who has overshadowed the world. It is the traditional Jesus who is carven in our churches and cathedrals, depicted in our masterpieces of painting, sung in our popular hymns, and even shown on our cinema films. It is from his dominion that the modern mind has to some extent revolted, and the fact of paramount and vital importance is this — that the modern mind, as seen in most men in the street, is unaware that in revolting from the traditional Jesus it has not of necessity revolted from the historical Jesus at all. If our Protestant forefathers lightened the ship by throwing over some of the cargo, we have deliber-

ately gone so far as to abandon the ship for much the same reasons. But there is no necessity to abandon the ship, and to do so is indeed a direful calamity.

The portrait of this traditional Jesus is worthy of our best attention. With the reconstructed document "Q" and the original Mark before us, we have seen how extraordinarily little remains of the historical Christ. Speaking historically and authoritatively, we have no more before us than this — that somewhere and at some time and in some manner unknown, but in Palestine before the beginning of our era, there was born a man, Jesus, who was thought to be of distant royal Jewish blood, and whose mother was an unknown Mary. This Jesus first steps upon the stage of history as a full-grown man, apparently aroused by the preaching of an historical John the Baptist. While practically none of his doings, a certain number of his sayings have come down to us, and these sayings apparently aroused such hostility that he was eventually crucified. Exactly what led up to this event or why his teaching aroused such hostility we can only conjecture, but there would have been an end of the matter if it had not been that certain

of his zealous followers believed that he rose from the dead and by doing so showed himself to have been by no manner of means merely a man, but the divine, ever-existing Son of God himself. And the Christian world ever since has been rent into factions and schisms attempting to square these theories with reason and logic, and working out corollaries based upon them.

This is the historical Jesus; but how different is the traditional! It is a fuller, richer, detailed picture, which does indeed afford material for innumerable Lives. It is of interest to sketch the traditional portrait in those details which have no historical support whatever.

According to this, there was a blameless Jewish virgin who from her earliest days exhibited an amazing holiness. The names of her father and mother are given, the place of her birth and upbringing, and, in full detail, the story of her unwilling betrothal to an old man called Joseph. Joseph, however, instructed thereto by God, had at no time carnal relationship with her. Eventually, heralded by all kinds of supernatural portents, a child was born to her, who early exhibited an astounding wisdom and beauty of character. This child, after thirty years of a

carpenter's life, during which a sense of his divine origin continually grew upon him, entered upon a ministry which was attended by every kind of supernatural power, and which not unnaturally set Palestine in an uproar. Amid this turmoil, the divine man remained indifferent even to the clamor of the populace to make him king. With incredible foresight, he wrote no books, and indeed took no steps to ensure a continuation of the knowledge of himself or of his teachings, except that he devoted all his energies to the calling out and instruction of a certain small band of men who were to be the means of a divine miracle as wonderful as that of himself. These men were to compose a body with functions and a spiritual unity comparable to those of his own body, and possessed of a divine spirit giving it the power of supernatural remembrance, inerrable wisdom, and unquenchable life. Membership in it was to be salvation, the salvation he had come on earth to bring through a death, resurrection, and ascension which he explicitly foretold. With ever-increasing detail these latter events are portrayed. We are shown the traditional Christ in his very words and acts, going up to Jerusalem, himself

instituting the last Paschal Feast and inaugurating a new sacrifice of a new spotless lamb which was indeed himself. He traverses the way to the cross, falling therein, meeting his mother, being nailed at the place of sacrifice, and dying there at a mystical hour with mystical words. We are told even the name of the centurion who crucified him. We are carried ourselves through the gate of death and are shown the triumphant Christ harrowing Hell and leading a train of exultant Old Testament saints to the Throne of God. Arrived there, we are asked to contemplate the triumphant Son, eternally removing the wrath of a Father angry with sin by the exhibition of his wounds. We are asked to observe a discomfited and chagrined Devil falling back before this spectacle and fleeing in terror before the Church on earth, utilizing his little remaining time in every artifice to win, if it might be, a few more souls to eternal damnation. We are even exhorted to look into the future and see this triumphant Christ descending with angels to his expectant Church and establishing his reign on earth for a thousand years. Incredible and amazing as it may seem, this is the traditional picture, and it has no support

whatever — as indeed, of course, in some matters it cannot have — from either history or the Gospels which we possess.

Now the tragic thing is that in many quarters this traditional Jesus is regarded as an imposture, and as a substitution for the historical Jesus that involves great loss to us. Protestant Christians have inherited some part of this point of view from the early reformers, and, aided by the ever-increasing resources of modern knowledge, they have gone ever farther and farther in its pursuit. In our day the sense of imposture has left the study and gone to some extent into the street. There it has been popularized, not to say vulgarized. While an attenuated traditional Jesus affords good copy to the cinema producer and the Protestant publisher, — an attenuated Jesus who is neither wholly literary, historical, nor traditional, — a vast number of men have simply set him aside altogether. The law no longer enforces his worship, and we have among us an increasing population to whom the name of Jesus is no more than an oath, and who have set all religion outside their lives as a thing of no importance. Conscious of this growing population, the Protestant churches are in large

measure seized with panic. Their own portrait of him a supreme muddle, their theology and their deductions grow naturally worse and worse. Their logical end, too, will be to give him up altogether. This, to all intents and purposes, the Unitarians have already done, just as the Quakers before them gave up the essence of the traditional story.

But the traditional portrait is neither an imposture nor a substitution. In the first place, it is the original portrait, in the sense that it is the portrait which, in embryo, the Christian Church originally accepted. The Christian Church, considered historically, derives from its acceptance of that portrait. There was even a sense in which it was the only portrait it possessed. This traditional Jesus is the Jesus whom men thought, a generation after his death, they had seen upon earth and touched and handled. It is, of course, perfectly obvious to us why they thought so, for they were amazingly ignorant and superstitious men, with less practical knowledge of God and the world than the average schoolboy of fifteen to-day. It is thought irreverent to say such things, but in point of fact, while a man like Paul may have possessed a mind

capable of much, it was a mind so twisted and distorted and ignorant that he was incapable of making reasonable judgments upon biology or psychology or history. It is no miracle that the Christian Church came into existence; but there is a miracle which we moderns tend to neglect, and in treading upon which we tread upon holy ground.

For nineteen centuries the European mind has been elaborating, not to say constructing, the most wonderful and beautiful figure that the world has ever seen. The European mind is responsible for many achievements — achievements in art and science which are stupendous in their magnitude, and which well prompted Swinburne to sing, "Glory to Man in the highest, Man is the Master of things!" And its possible future achievements rightly dazzle us. When Mr. H. G. Wells imagines his Utopias of two thousand years hence, we feel that he is scarcely stepping beyond the bounds of possibility.

But none of its past achievements can vie with this, and confidently we assert that none of its future achievements will surpass it. The Western human mind has given substance to this figure of the traditional Jesus. In so doing,

it has, if you like, made a God; but the miracle is that that God, which must in a sense have been made in its own image, should be so surpassingly beautiful. No one of us has done it; a million minds have brought to it every treasure that they possess. The admirable tenderness of a John, the civic sense of an Augustine, the logic of an Athanasius, the humility of a Saint Francis of Assisi, the wide vision of a Loyola, all have gone to the fashioning of that figure. To make it, the Jew has given of his mysticism, the Greek of his subtlety, the Roman of his justice, the Anglo-Saxon of his practicality, and the Frank of his sense of beauty. A thousand unknown men and women have added touches here and there, not only of set thought, by their creative ability, but unconsciously, by the beauty and nobility of their lives. There has been no work like this in the whole story of human life. Rightly, too, do all these artificers speak of Jesus as their Founder, for he it was who began this thing, however shadowy he may appear when we look back to him, by the unique beauty of his life and sayings. He was truly the foundation stone, and it is to him that Christendom owes it that we may tread to-day the

aisles and courts of so magnificent a temple. Christendom has made for itself a God; we call his name Jesus; and truly it was Jesus who began the work. But this God of ours, this traditional Jesus, is not the historical Jesus, and is not the literary Jesus of the Gospels.

But with that negation we are not now concerned. We are concerned with the much more valuable and definite positive of the existence in the world to-day of this traditional Christian God. The point at issue is that in all the centuries we have needed him, and that we never needed him more than to-day. Our civilization cannot do without him. Without him our civilization will wreck itself in some unimaginably bloody war, or in some hideously materialistic phase of machinery and vulgarity in which life will not be worth living. In him and around him there has been concentrated for so long all that is beautiful and worth while, all that is noble and generous, all that goes to make up the best in man, to such a degree that in losing him we lose it.

It is easy to give a parallel. The early missionaries in their zest destroyed the ancient religion of the Polynesian world. That ancient

religion, fabricated of art and poetry and inspiring legends, had entered every phase of Polynesian life. Men even made beautiful canoes and houses, and ornamented them with elaborate designs, because religion entered into their craftsmanship. The very utensils of their houses, their order and beauty and cleanliness, their song and dance and magnanimity, the whole texture of their civilization which in the main we admire and envy and regret, derived from their religion. That religion was taken away; the proposed substitution was to them foreign and modern; it could not be effected; and the whole structure collapsed. Not only does the Polynesian to-day, as a direct result, improbable as it may seem at first sight, build his house of corrugated iron and cook in empty kerosene tins, but he is fast dying inevitably out to the music of fox trots and the flicker of cinema films.

If we lose our traditional Jesus, our Western civilization will tread much the same path to ruin. We have already taken far too many steps along that path. We cannot in a thousand years construct a figure to take his place. No romantic saga imported from the East or con-

structed by one mind, however able, can take his place. No system of theology, based however invulnerably upon the facts of science or the dead stones of history, can take his place. It is of the very essence of this traditional Jesus that he is not historical, that he is not scientific, that he does not derive from any one man's ingenuities. Man cannot live by bread alone, and humanity cannot be nourished on cold science or dead history. Art and beauty and imagination look to other things to give them life. When the magic touch of imagination has left the world, then perhaps too late we shall realize that it derived its life from the truth of imaginary things.

You cannot find anywhere, in the whole range of literature or art, any story so complete in loveliness and pathos as this story of the traditional Jesus. Words fail as one contemplates it. It has taken to itself perhaps the one magic that is left to the world. The very words in which it is enshrined are of incomparable beauty and moving power. Delete that traditional figure, and all the best and happiest of our life becomes a hollow sham. You can see it in little things as well as great, even down to a Christmas

festival, which is all tinsel and electric light without the manger of Bethlehem, without the littered straw, the rough stones, the ox and the sheep and the ass crowding in in adoration, the shepherds listening to the song of the angels, and the three kings coming from afar. For it is still true that

> The angels keep their ancient places,
> Turn but a stone and start a wing;
> 'T is ye, 't is your estrangèd faces
> That miss the many-splendored thing.

It is true that the traditional Christ, in all his fullness, must remain the primary heritage of the Catholics. The Catholic accepts him, and Catholic theology with him, because he accepts the Catholic Church — an attitude upon the reasonableness of which we are not called here to enter. So far as we are concerned, we cannot give to the Catholic Church the qualities and titles which she demands of us. Misguided, ignorant, and fanatical as were many of the Fathers of Protestantism, we are their sons, and must remain so. But we are fools and blind if we let the Catholic on this account lock upon us the doors to the temple of the traditional Christ. We need him, and we will not let him go. It is,

however, a very practical matter for us how we can retain him in all his beauty and yet remain free from the many implications and entanglements to progress which have been only too disastrously linked up to his name. We feel that the story of Dostoevsky's Inquisitor is only too lamentably true. That great Russian writer's hero was an ardent and not ignoble follower of the traditional Christ, but that very thing not only prevented him from acting differently, but impelled him to say to the historic Christ when he presented himself in lowly guise before him: "No doubt you are he. But I can do no otherwise. You would humiliate the Church, and I must send you to the stake. . . ." We do not, in other words, mean to relinquish the beautiful fables which are told in the Gospel about him; we are still going to tell our children the lovely stories of his blessing little children, of his feeding five thousand with five loaves, of his tenderness to the mother of the little maid whom he raised from the dead, and of his inspiring courage and nobility in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Hill of Calvary. We want them to love the names of Mary, Jesus, and Joseph. We want them to sing "Once in royal

David's city," "Hark! the herald angels sing," that they may comfort themselves when they grow older with "Jesu, Lover of my soul." But we cannot abide the hideous implications that there is a God who demanded the price of blood, or who can remain unmoved while a Devil drags his deluded victims to Hell.

Is there any way in which this can be done? There is, undoubtedly, but it is not the way of modern Protestant thought. You cannot pare the traditional Jesus theologically to suit your convenience. You cannot identify him with an historical Jesus. The two figures are eternally separate, and in a sense irreconcilable. And it is even well that it is so. The main power and charm of the traditional Jesus lie in the fact that he is not historical, that he is not mummified in any Gospel, and that he can be seen from many angles. He does not belong to the study, and he is not the creation of understanding. His ancestry is a far more beautiful one than that. Man is a logical and reasonable being up to a point, but, curiously enough, most of beauty and almost all of inspiration are as a rule neither logical nor reasonable. Ten thousand of the world's deeds of heroism would never have been

performed if men had listened to reason. The majority of our most inspired movements would never have been initiated if men had listened to logic. It is said that the sailors of Japanese destroyers wished to save, with their limited accommodation, the able-bodied crews of sinking hospital ships rather than the nurses and the hopelessly disabled wounded. They were logical and reasonable; there was only one thing that they were not — they were not Christians.

We can still have faith in the traditional Jesus, but we have got into a dreadful muddle in our use of this word "faith." Faith is not intellectual proof. I do not require faith in knowing that two and two make four. Once a child has burned his fingers in the fire, he does not require faith in his mother to prevent him from putting his fingers between the bars of the grate. Faith is essentially the mind's acceptance, in a certain degree and in a certain way, of things that are not proved, and even of things that are not provable. It does its finest work when it is based upon things of this nature. It often, in point of fact, loses, beyond rhyme or reason, all its potency when its undemonstrable basis is made demonstrable and logical. This is in itself

unreasonable, but it happens to belong to the nature and being of that queer animal, man.

This, then, is the real nature of religious faith. It is the spirit in which originally men triumphantly shouted the Apostles' Creed, but it is not the spirit in which well-meaning citizens remain outwardly devout but inaudible in our churches to-day because they feel that they do not believe that Jesus Christ descended into Hell or will visibly come again with glory to judge the quick and the dead. They are confusing faith with an intellectual judgment. We have, indeed, so far got into that habit since the passing of the ages of faith that it is amazingly difficult to get out of it. We must, in fact, invent a new nomenclature if we are ever to see religious faith again strong among us.

In this sense, and in this sense only, we do not ask men to believe in a traditional Jesus. Or, if you like, we will put it another way. We ask men to believe in a traditional Jesus, but we do not mean by "believe" that we ask them to accept as history his traditional story, or to accept as science his theological sin-bearing. It would be easier, probably, if we asked them instead to glory in the traditional Jesus, or to

revere the beauty of the traditional Jesus, or to promise to tell their children with tenderness and love the traditional saga of Jesus. But all these things are to have "faith" in Jesus. They are to believe that this traditional story, which has been evolved through two thousand years from so small a beginning, is a noble and uplifting ideal, is, among the turmoil and din of life, a white plume of Navarre. It is to ask them to set aside for a time the dreadful logic which rules them in most of their waking hours, and to give free rein to that finer spiritual thing within them which needs for its growth the contemplation of the beautiful, the worship of the unattainable, and the acceptance of the imaginary. In some such way as this we too can enjoy the heritage of the traditional Christ. He will make us finer, nobler men and women, and there is none other who can do so as can he.

The traditional Christ must be the subject of our worship. So he will remain the source of our inspiration. He is not and cannot be, thank God, a subject for the exercise of our historical curiosity or of our scientific vivisection. It is the shadowy historical Jesus, who is so dimly outlined for us in such lost documents as "Q"

and the original Mark, who may be and is a most interesting subject of historical study and scientific investigation. It is not, perhaps, a very wide field, or one in which we are ever likely to arrive at very authoritative results. But there is no doubt as to its enormous interest, and no doubt, within limits, as to its profit. If one had to choose, it would probably be better to have the faith of Pasteur's charcoal burner than the wide learning of a Hegel. But there is no need so to choose. It is possible to glory in the traditional Christ, and to worship him as the ideal and inspirer of all nobility, while at the same time devoting our best intelligence to a scholarly study of the scant remains of the historical Christ.

One last anticipatory paragraph. The minister of religion has to remember that it is with the worship of the traditional Christ rather than with the study of the historical Christ that he is mainly concerned. We did not set him in the ministry that he should be a professor or a kind of policeman. We set him there that he might be a minister or a servant of men. He can serve us best in our need by holding up before us the traditional Jesus, in all his beauty and nobility, whom we tend to forget.

III

CHRIST AND KNOWLEDGE

NEVERTHELESS, we are mainly concerned in this little book with an attempt to see clearly the features of this historical Jesus. There is no denying that the glowing colors of the traditional portrait of Christ — masterpiece, as it is, that we cannot afford to lose from our gallery — have tended to detract attention from the more sombre colors of the historical Jesus. Our day and age ought to be able to investigate and value at its true worth this historical portrait in a way which is not possible to a Catholic and which was beyond the capability of a mediævalist. The measure in which we are free to worship the traditional Christ is the measure in which we are free to investigate the historical Christ.

The mediævalists, as their brethren the modern Catholics, cannot face one fact especially about the historical Christ which is ultimately

the most arresting in its significance. Modern Protestant churchmen shrink almost equally from it. It is that Christ was an ignorant man. Catholic theology, indeed, in the face of all evidence and reason, is compelled to maintain the exact opposite. Catholic doctors have taught that the knowledge in the brain of the child Jesus in the cradle was infinite, and that if he had pleased he could have argued with an Einstein or anticipated the discoveries of Edison. More modern theologians, shrinking from this, have elaborately argued that the person Christ was not without all knowledge, but that he deliberately limited it in himself, as it is thought that by the Incarnation he deliberately limited in some respects his divine power.

All these are the speculations of theorists who are driven to them by the necessity of supporting a case. They are fantastic excursions into fairyland. The fact is that the historical Jesus, who steps on the world's stage at the preaching of John the Baptist, was what we should unequivocally call to-day an ignorant man. Scanty as our knowledge is of him, there is not only no indication to the contrary, but considerable evidence as to the fact. For example, the

crowd was agape at his wisdom, but if he had been a learned man as we count learning it would instead have laughed at his folly. A thousand years later the crowd jeered when Christopher Columbus said the earth was round, or when Galileo maintained that the sun was a fixed body about which the earth revolved. It did not laugh at the mediæval monk who depicted an intrepid explorer crawling to the edge of a flat world and peering over. On the contrary, it thought him an unusually clever cartographer. And what the crowd of Jesus's day thought clever was not cleverness at all, but a singular quality about him of which we shall speak later, and which they were right indeed to admire. But it was not wisdom in the sense of knowledge.

We have a considerable number of instances of the ignorance of Jesus. He seems to have believed that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, that there had been a prophet Jonah who spent three days and nights in a whale's belly, and that the Old Testament story of the Jewish kings and patriarchs was good history. It would, of course, have been extraordinary had he thought otherwise, but the portrait of the traditional Jesus has so obscured the historic figure behind

it that it comes to devout persons as a shock to put his ignorance into plain language. Thus Jesus no doubt had no idea as to the existence of the New World, the most crude knowledge as to the properties and functions of the human body, and an ignorance of the heavens and the earth which would seem abysmal to a modern schoolboy.

It is well to bear in mind here, however, that the really arresting thing is not that he was ignorant, but that he escaped in a most remarkable manner the results of his ignorance. An ignorant human mind is not as a rule a blank slate. It is a slate blank of true knowledge, but it is a slate scribbled all over with writing — the writing of prejudice and superstition which distorts the judgment of its owner. The trouble with a savage is not that he does not know his multiplication table or his elementary geography, but that he thinks he knows the exact number of devils which roam the world, and that disease can be driven from a sick person by the administration of some nauseating filth or the beating of tom-toms. The measure of his ignorance is usually the measure of the distortion of his mind. But Jesus, while ignorant enough, had not a

distorted mind. He had, on the contrary, an unusual and penetrating common sense which set him head and shoulders above the men of his day, and which, as a matter of fact, still keeps him there above the men of our own day.

To return, however, to the question of mere knowledge, it is not only pretty evident that Jesus had no particular knowledge of biology, or of science in any of its forms, or of history, above the abysmal ignorance of his day, but it is also fairly clear and of much greater importance to us that he had no particular knowledge of God. Herein we reach something which the most modern of modern Protestant churchmen have never dared face. A convention of modern churchmen recently held in England horrified the orthodox by asserting unusually unequivocatingly a good deal of what has already been written in these pages, but it maintained that the great contribution of Jesus to ancient and modern thought was his statement that God was our Father. The Fatherhood of God was, they said, Christ's revelation to the world.

But that doctrine was not so much a revelation as a guess, and it was a guess that was wrong. If modern science has shown us anything at all,

it has made unquestionably plain the fact that, if there be a Supreme Being at all, it is only by the greatest possible stretch of imagination that one can conceive of him as in any sense exercising fatherly qualities toward us. Jesus beautifully said that not one sparrow falls to the ground without its death affecting the Father's heart, but we know that, if that Father exists, he has contemplated for æons countless stark tragedies of animal life without lifting a little finger to prevent or ameliorate them. Thus every year ten thousand migratory birds, driven by blind instinct, keep on in the face of wind and rain till every nerve is racked and every muscle tired, to fall into the sea and be drowned. Whole races of unfortunate creatures, some of them probably as lovable and as harmless as our elephants, have evolved and perished miserably, like the mammals whose carcasses we still occasionally find within the Arctic Circle, the victims of blind laws of nature which cannot possibly be construed into the tender working of a Father. The most elementary knowledge of natural history makes this clear.

Nor is this all. Jesus said that the very hairs of our heads are all numbered by that same ever-

watchful and loving Father. Does he then number the microscopic cells in the embryo which are blindly developing into a moron or a criminal lunatic? Jesus said that an earthly father would not give his son a stone when he asked for bread, and that just so our Heavenly Father knew how to give good gifts to them that asked him. But there are really no two questions about the value of intercessory prayer. Prayer may subjectively benefit the one who prays, but prayer never turned aside the bullet from a modern rifle or saved a man who fell from a liner in midocean and who could not swim. There are good Christians among us who shrink from such a bald statement, but we know that it is simply so. Jesus deduced that our Heavenly Father was good because he made his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust, but the illustration, considered scientifically, simply provokes a smile from a modern mind. Our Heavenly Father has nothing immediately to do with the rain at all. If he had, we could only conclude that he used his power exceedingly foolishly. He gives millions of gallons to the little salt-water fishes who do not want it, while a land, no distance at all away in his eyes, is suffering a drought causing

the death of millions. And if the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope of Rome, and the President of the Methodist Union were to cause themselves to be abandoned in the middle of the Sahara, in the expectation that their prayers and the prayers of the faithful throughout the entire world would suffice to supply them with enough water to maintain life, they would certainly be disappointed.

Such sayings read almost jocularly, and will perhaps be thought out of place in a serious consideration such as this. But it is necessary to be extreme in order to bring home to readers the facts of the case. This doctrine of a Father-God is now centuries old; we have accepted it indeed from the lips of the historical Christ, but on the assumed authority of the traditional Christ whose voice was none other than the voice of God; and it is a comfortable doctrine. But comfortable or not does not matter; the fact is that it is not true. Jesus had no special knowledge of God. He dredged his knowledge of him out of the depths of a peculiarly sincere, pellucid, and loving heart, but it was a human heart at best. His knowledge of God was obtained in the same way that a thousand mystics

in all ages and of all races have obtained their knowledge of him. It is indeed of extreme importance and interest that almost all mystics have arrived at some such knowledge, but this does not really help the case. A Hindoo mystic believes that he enters into personal relationship with and knowledge of God — but he calls him Krishna. A Western European like the blessed Jan van Ruysbroeck enters into personal relationship with and knowledge of God — but he calls him Christ. Jesus enters into personal relationship with and knowledge of God — but he calls him his Heavenly Father. There may have been a difference in degree, but the process was the same in each case. The fact will appear more or less illuminating to us according as our birth and upbringing have prepared us to receive it, but there is a sense in which it remains unquestionably a fact for all that. The fact that the man Jesus believed in a Heavenly Father is not the last word on the subject, and does not place the matter beyond dispute for all time.

Even more, Jesus naturally identified his Heavenly Father with the Person of the old Jewish Jehovah, and this identification has come down to us as a legacy scarcely to be ques-

tioned by the most daring. It is true that historically it has been questioned by such men as the heretic Marcion, who produced a Church which was watered by the blood of its martyrs and stamped out by the fury of other Christians in the first centuries of our era. Its main bequest to us of this age is the oldest dated inscription from any Christian place of worship in the world — the inscribed stone of a Marcionite chapel of a village near Damascus of the year 318 A.D. But Marcion had not the psychological knowledge to enable him to do more than fumble with the possible truth. Even to-day we can only make a tentative guess at it, but it is a tentative guess which may bring relief to some of us. The existence of a Creator-God who has to be, in the words of a Christian creed, uncreate, incomprehensible, and eternal, is, as a matter of fact, a speculative guess which derives from our apparent intellectual need of some such Originator. This seeming intellectual necessity may disappear before our increasing knowledge of the true nature of time and space and matter. Should it disappear, as indeed it already has disappeared for many of us, we should still be left with something which is a very big something

indeed. As has been said, mystics in all countries and in all ages, of whom Jesus is the chief, have found, not in any intellectual necessity, but in the depths of their own spiritual being, what for the sake of the lack of words we are compelled to call a "Being" whom they have variously named. But we are compelled to say at least this — that if such a "Being" exists, he cannot be identified with such Gods as either Krishna or Jehovah. Or if he is to be so identified, then the works attributed to Krishna or Jehovah are not their works. The Spiritual Being of the mystics could have had neither the many loves of Krishna nor the many human fallibilities of Jehovah.

We are here on the brink of a metaphysical question upon which we have neither the space nor the learning to enter. But at least we are as men who peer into an infinite gulf where formerly they thought there was a level plain. The writer at least cannot regard as wholly subjective and unreal the whole record of mystical experience. The scrap of parchment on which are traced a rough drawing and abrupt broken words by that normal master of language, Pascal, cannot be set aside so easily. "In the year of

grace, 1654, Monday, 23 November, Day of St. Clement, pope and martyr," — so runs the curiously exact language, — "from half-past ten till half-past twelve, Fire!" Pascal went on indeed to write: "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not the God of philosophers and of scholars. Certitude. Certitude . . . Peace." That Pascal was right in his identification of his God with the Old Testament God we cannot be sure; that those were the greatest two hours of his life we cannot doubt. If Jesus, dying on the cross, actually exclaimed, *Father into thy Hands I commend my spirit*, we cannot be sure that he was right in identifying his Father with the Creator-God, but it would be contrary to all reason and at variance with our most profound sentiments to maintain that his soul in that hour was not aware of an experience before the record of which the most materialistic of us stand in awe.

But all this is at least now, and possibly must remain forever, unproved and perhaps unprovable. It is of much more practical concern that Jesus was essentially an ignorant man. He was the child of an amazingly crude and ignorant age of which it is difficult to exaggerate the crudity

and ignorance. Its very crudity and ignorance remove from us, in point of fact, all real difficulty in reading the Gospels. From the fishermen to the then accounted learned Pharisee, who constituted his band of apostles, there is no doubt, as Dr. Sanday says, that what the disciples thought they saw when they watched Our Lord's miracles was not what we should have thought we had seen if we had been there. A child of ten would give a very different account of an entertainment by a conjuror from that given by an adult of fifty. A savage gives a very different account of a phonograph from that given by a civilized man. But it is exactly the implications of this crudity and ignorance to which Jesus, alone of his age, rises superior. We can understand that what seemed a miracle to the disciples might have seemed to us but the exhibition of a superior and undaunted will.

Those of us who have traveled in savage lands have seen many such miracles. A doctor can cure with a bottle of colored water, or even a few firm words, a savage who is about to lie down and die, and who if left to himself will die, and concerning whose illness and death his savage friends will relate the most astounding stories

of supernatural happenings and appearances. It is, in point of fact, neither the colored water nor the formula which cures him, though the savage will think that it is. It is the impact of an unsuperstitious and common-sense modern mind upon a superstitious and nonsensical one. Thus do even to-day the blind receive their sight and the lame walk. No less may common sense and an undistorted mind have used a little clay or a formula in the days of Christ.

It was, apparently, this superiority and clarity of mind which provoked the hostility of every vested interest and authority in Christ's day. It was not any revelation that he made or the exhibition of any peculiar knowledge which brought him to the cross; it was simply his common sense in an age of fanatical nonsense. The miracle of it would be startling enough and disturbing enough to bring him, or any minister of his who exhibited it, to the equivalent of the cross in our day. It is this which is worth our closest examination.

For, while Jesus was an ignorant man, he was also in the true meaning of the word the wisest of men. How he came to be such is beyond our knowing, though a like phenomenon astonishes

us as much to-day as it did the crowd in Galilee. How or why a Napoleon is born in an obscure island village, of parents undistinguished by any particular military or political genius, or how and why a William Blake is born in a family which never wrote a line of poetry, is beyond our understanding. But it is not an uncommon happening. We may almost say that it is the common happening. It is not really wonderful that we know next to nothing of the origin and ancestry of a Shakespeare; it would be much more unusual if his forbears for generations had been masters of dramatic art. And it is much the same in the case of Christ.

It is a dazzling wonder how the mind of Christ came to be so pellucid and unbiased. An ignorant Jew, born in a crude and superstitious age, without having had, apparently, any opportunity to escape from it, he rivaled the men who possessed the greatest learning of his age in having a perfectly undistorted mind on every question. We may still envy him that, and stand in adoration before it. Our own minds, after a lapse of two thousand years, are still incredibly distorted and incapable of sane judgments. The common sense of a question is the

last thing that we see, and the more vital the question the less capable we are of treating it in a rational manner. Who was rational upon the nature of Germans during the Great War? What temperance advocate is rational upon the subject of Prohibition? What theologian is rational upon the subject of God? The thing has become almost comic and proverbial among us — as, for example, when we speak with a smile of the unreasoning bigotry of theologians, who should, on the face of it, be the most reasonable and unbigoted of men. But it is not a comedy; it is the starkest human tragedy. And it is from this tragedy that Jesus rose clear.

Let us take an example. Countless preachers have dilated on the wisdom shown by Jesus when they brought him the tribute money and asked him whether they should pay tribute to Cæsar or no. But there was no wisdom, in the accepted sense of the word, in his answer at all. That was what staggered them. When they held out their penny, their own petty minds were as confused and angry as a hive of disturbed bees on every conceivable and inconceivable issue of politics and religion. A clever man would have entered lengthily into a discussion as to whether

the head of Cæsar on the coin did or did not break the law of God with respect to the making of graven images; he would have discussed learnedly the implications of the text, and have argued that, while of course the nature of God was unchangeable, it was possible that he might "wink" in the peculiar circumstances of the case. Saint Paul would certainly have done so. A really clever historian would have spoken for hours upon the exact meaning of sovereignty and political right. And so on, and so on, endlessly. But Jesus snapped at once to the answer, which was not a learned answer, or an answer to suit the times, or an answer at all in so far as these men were concerned. He gave them sheer common sense when they had expected a rigmarole of wise nonsense. And, as always, they were dismayed and at a loss before it.

Or again, there was the occasion when they came to him with the long story of the man who died without children, and whose wife six of his brethren took in their effort to raise up successors to his name. We can see them standing there, blinking like wise blind owls in the sunlight, and thinking that they exhibited every sign of profound scholarship when they asked him whose

wife she should be in the Resurrection. Their little minds were so distorted that they could not see how he could escape a clever theological sermon which would afford them matter for endless dispute for the rest of their days. But the answer of Jesus was not clever. The only thing you can say about it is that it was common sense. It proceeded from an undistorted mind, from a clear, trenchant mind that was functioning like a flashing sword. The answer of Jesus was the first, last, and only thing to be said on the subject, and it was the answer of a sane man in a world of lunatics. As a matter of fact, the world is still lunatic on the hereafter, and Jesus is pretty nearly the only sane man among us on the subject. We may translate what he said thus: "The conditions of life in the spiritual world are perfectly plainly beyond the comprehension of men before they become spiritual beings." This is just common sense, and no more.

We tend to congratulate ourselves on seeing, for our part, the amazing common sense of Jesus in these questions, and we can even chuckle with amusement at the discomfiture of the Jews when he wades through their ridiculous Sabbatarianism and the like. But are we, in point of fact,

wholly lined up with him? Did this radiant common sense flash out only once or twice, or was it characteristic of all his sayings and doings? And if characteristic of all his sayings and doings, whose side are we really on — the side of him and common sense, or the side of the world and fanatical nonsense? Imagine Jesus arraigned before the Supreme Allied War Council in 1914. He stands there, this little commonplace man, who might, to judge from his bearing and dress, be indeed nothing but a peasant carpenter. But his eye is clear. It does not see things through the lenses of centuries of hate or political expediency or worldly well-being. It is not the eye of a great general, or of a business man who sees immense opportunities for great business, or of a newspaper proprietor, or even of a mother crazed with grief. He says, "Love your enemies." "What!" exclaims the great general. "In the face of an enemy armed to the teeth?" "If a man strike you on one cheek, turn to him the other *also*," replies Christ. "But what of atrocities?" demands the politician. "Do good to them that despitefully use you and persecute you," returns the Christ imperturbably. Is this common sense? Would not the

War Council have treated such a man in almost the same way as the Jews and Romans treated Christ?

Or take another startling case. Here is a woman taken in adultery, in the very act. Imagine her dragged before a circle of our police officials, our Bishop Mannings, our secretaries of Societies for the Suppression of Vice — the Pope himself, if you will. Two thousand years have elapsed since it first happened — years in which we have learned psychology, years in which we have studied the curious spectacle of the mixed impulses of the human mind in the light of our knowledge of the unexpected workings of inherited sex impulses and repressions and the like; years, too, in which we have had plenty of opportunity to observe what terrors and crimes can shelter under a respectably legal and even spiritually solemnized union of man and woman, and what nobility and devotion there may be where all this is lacking. Is there, then, one high-placed official among us who would turn away his face not to shame the trembling woman, and say gently, "Neither do I condemn thee"? Would they not one and all conceive it their public duty to act otherwise? Would

they not one and all, in summing up, argue theologically, or from the point of view of moral science, or legally from the words of the law, that while pitying, etc., etc., and making every allowance for, etc., etc., it was their painful duty to . . . commit . . . or refuse the Holy Communion . . . or . . .? Did Jesus exhibit common sense? Was his mind clear, undistorted, pellucid, clean as the flash of a sword?

That we have hitherto unreservedly accepted that it was not, is common knowledge. So far as the churches are concerned, books have been written, and heaven only knows how many sermons preached, to show that he spoke in a parabolic or a mystical manner, or in a manner indicating what our general mental attitude should be, but not, of course, how we ought particularly to behave in every instance. It is to their undying shame that scarcely one prominent Christian minister, in Europe or America, dared to say, "Love the Germans," during the Great War. A prominent English ecclesiastic has not yet wholly escaped from the opprobrium he incurred for saying, in 1914, that the Kaiser, as he had known him, had been a not unpleasant and even a religious man; and

the writer knows an obscure curate, the least pugnacious and dangerous of men, who was driven from his curacy and stood actually in need of police protection because he invited his congregation to pray for the enemy dying and to have sympathy for enemy women in suspense and bereavement. And when administrators of law and order are confronted with the literal keepers of the Sermon on the Mount they imprison them as conscientious objectors, or hound them to exile or death as dangerous communists.

If, however, we unreservedly accept that the mind of Jesus was an undistorted mind, we shall feel that the world has a great need for his common sense to-day as it had in the days of his earthly life. This is his great contribution to the history of life and manners. It is for this that we can bow down before him almost as before a God. There are ten thousand questions which wreck and ruin human life on the earth for which we need the common sense of Jesus. Our marriage laws, alike with the matter of our armaments, would be straightened out if we could approach these questions with minds untainted by inherited superstitions, by national and class prejudices, or by dire mistrustful fore-

bodings. We argue at immense length as to what he did or did not mean by some traditional saying, and as to what implications follow from it. We vest his words with an authority which they never had, and probably were never meant to have. As a result of such a confused approach to him, the world has experienced such horrors as the Spanish Inquisition and a modern statute book. If we need the traditional Christ as the God of our imagination and the inspirer of beauty, we need the historic Christ as the God of common sense.

> The world sits at the feet of Christ,
> Unknowing, blind, and unconsoled;
> It yet shall touch His garment's fold,
> And feel the heavenly Alchemist
> Transform its very dust to gold.

IV

CHRIST AND SIN

The common sense of the Great Galilean was never more strikingly exhibited than in his whole attitude toward sin and the forgiveness of sin, and upon no subject was he in more definite opposition to the ideas of this time. Yet while the churches that call him Master credit him, contrary to both reason and evidence, with all wisdom, they have not accepted in the least his common sense in this. They follow, on the contrary, the Old Testament point of view of his historic enemies. They have, moreover, so successfully imposed their mind upon the world at large that even our statute books agree with Moses rather than with Christ. And the churches with their traditional portrait have so far displaced the historical Jesus that we are unaware that it is so.

The Old Testament regards sin as principally an offense in the eyes of Jehovah which

requires purging by a bloody sacrifice. In the days of the historical Jesus the Temple courts were a shambles in the process of this expiation. Moreover, Moses had tabulated and listed sins, weighing them in the balance as it were, and ascribing to this one this sacrifice and to that one that. We have isolated the Ten Commandments as the Old Testament itself does not isolate them. The list is only part of a definite table of offenses whose significance is, primarily, that they displease God and require a forgiveness to be obtained only through sacrifice. It is not too much to say that the whole attitude of the historical Jesus was in direct opposition to all of this.

Nor is it too much to say that the whole attitude of the traditional Church is a following of the Old Testament rather than a following of Jesus. In the first place, it is not possible to deny that all the weight of traditional theology has been placed upon the cross. For this reason the cross became the symbol of Christianity, and the three great historic branches of the Church have with equal emphasis insisted that what Christ did upon the cross was the reason for his coming into the world at all. The offer-

ing of himself as a sacrifice for sin was by far the most important aspect of his work. That the Mass is the centre of Catholic faith and devotion surely needs no proof, but Protestant churches no less than the Catholic have asserted that what the Mass stands for is the very backbone of their being. It is not a Catholic, nor a Greek, but a Presbyterian Confession of Faith which says: "The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself . . . hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him." From Roman priests to Salvation Army captains, each in his own way, but all alike, Christian ministers have asserted that the main mission of Christ was to save sinners from their sins by the outpouring of his blood on the cross of Calvary.

> What can wash away my stain?
> Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

The blood of Jesus is more efficacious blood than that of sheep and lambs — that is all.

Once again, let us make no mistake about it: this aspect of things is as old as the Gospels — that is to say, as old as the traditional Christ

himself. Saint John made a number of daring assumptions (if we do not say that he invented a large number of daring fictions), but none greater than this — that he asserted of Jesus, or even made Jesus assert of himself: *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up . . . For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* That is John III. 14, 16, which, if it is peculiarly the charter of Protestantism, is none the less the message of the Catholic Church. Christ was the sin-bearer who by the sacrifice of himself purchased for us salvation.

It is this which is the substance, almost the sum, of Saint Paul's teaching. It is for this reason that he cares so little to relate to his converts the parables or the miracles of the historical Jesus. It is not too much to say that it is for this that he throws overboard the whole import of the moral teaching of Jesus. He does not say, *Blessed are the poor*, but, "Be diligent in business." He does not say, *Consider the lilies*, but, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat." He does not say, *Love your*

enemies, but, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Jesus instructed his disciples to call no man master or Lord, but Paul tells his disciples to honor the King. He sends a slave back to his master — which would, however, be a small thing if he did not send sinners to the cross rather than to the Sermon on the Mount. But that is his whole message — that the first man, Adam, sinned, and through him sin, leading to destruction, became the heritage of all men; that the second Adam was the Christ from heaven, the man Jesus in whom *ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*, who reconciled us to God by his cross. *We preach Christ crucified. Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.* And the preaching of the Gospel is the preaching of *Christ*, and *him crucified.*

It was not without storm and controversy that this Pauline reading of the life of Christ was accepted by the Church; and, even when accepted, it was not without storm and controversy that it was explained by the Church. To whom did Christ pay the price — to God or the Devil? Was it an exact bargain, or was there a little left over upon which the Church could

draw in moments of need, or a little left under which the blood of her martyrs could make up? With all these and similar controversies we have little to do; we are the inheritors of a Protestantism which tended illogically to set them on one side while it still more exalted the main doctrine. That Christ offered a bloody sacrifice of himself, that he paid a price, that sinners are lost eternally unless they are "washed in the blood of Jesus," and that Christ is pre-eminently the Saviour through his own blood — this is the key message of Protestantism, as it is the basis of the Catholic sacraments. Yet absolutely nothing of all this appears upon the lips or is revealed in the mind of the historical Jesus. It is a direct development of Old Testament teaching, and not of his.

The historical Jesus calls himself a Light to reveal God; a Shepherd to lead a flock from an old pasture to a new one; Bread for the soul's hunger; Water for the soul's thirst; Leaven to ferment the world's sodden life; Salt to keep life wholesome; the Physician of men's diseases; the Vine, the Door, the Strong Man, the Bridegroom; but he never calls himself the World's Victim or the World's Priest. It is obvious to

the most cursory reader that it is later theology which has read into all these images, and connected with all these metaphors, the idea of sin. It has remained for a Mrs. Eddy to proclaim to the world that Christ did not regard himself as a physician for that disease. In Holman Hunt's picture, it is the weeds of sin that prevent the Door from opening and which obscure the Light. And so on, almost ad nauseam. But the historical Christ knows none of these things. He is much simpler than that.

In the second place, it is most noteworthy that the historical Jesus has a different category of sins from that of the Old Testament or of Paul or of ecclesiastical writers after him. We have had our eyes blinded to this because the Church does not say that the sins which occupied the attention of Jesus are not sins, nor is it true that the sins which occupied the attention of Paul are not mentioned by Jesus. But the supreme difference is there for all that. The sins which occupied the attention of Jesus were hypocrisy, worldliness, intolerance, and selfishness; the sins which occupy the principal attention of the Church, as everybody knows from experience, are impurity, murder, the drinking

of alcohol, swearing, and the neglect of the Church's services and ordinances. A man may be a notoriously sharp business man, a hard man, a man in whose home there is love neither between husband and wife nor between master and servants, but he may be an excellent churchman for all that. His minister may have an uneasy suspicion that he is hypocritical, but he will only denounce him from the pulpit if he keeps a mistress or gets drunk in the street. But the scribes and Pharisees did not keep mistresses or get drunk in the street; yet the denunciation of them by Christ was shocking in its virulence. They prayed, they relieved the poor, they kept the Ten Commandments, they set the Church before themselves and the State; but he said to them, *Ye serpents, ye generations of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*

It is not that the historical Christ has nothing to say about sin. It would not be an exaggeration to say that half of the "Q" document is taken up with a discussion of it and its forgiveness. But the reader of Paul's Epistles literally rubs his eyes as he turns the pages of "Q." The kernel of the difference lies in this — that the sins which Christ denounced were social and of

the spirit, and the sins that Paul denounces are theological and of the body. Of course, the distinction can be fined down, argumentatively, on either side, but it is sins such as the various kinds of impurity and drunkenness that religion to-day denounces, while it was sins which ground down the widow and the orphan, which caused his little ones to stumble, or which made of men whited sepulchres, which called forth the anger of Christ. It was man's inhumanity to man much more than man's offenses against God which roused his wrath. If he ever took the scourge of small cords to cleanse the Temple, it was not so much, as religion has it, because the Temple of God was defiled, as because that which should have been a place of safe retreat for the poor of all nations had been made a den of thieves.

The full import of all this is a proposition enormously more startling. Jesus did not regard as sin at all a great deal of what the modern Church calls sin. Why did the religious leaders of his day call Jesus the friend of publicans and harlots? Let us translate the thing into modern speech. Why might virulent Prohibitionists call a modern minister the friend of drunkards?

There might, of course, be nothing more in it than "sound and fury, signifying nothing." There might be in it the implication that the minister was a friend of drunkards in order to effect their conversion to Prohibition, when the phrase would probably carry some such adjective as "good," as it was said of many broad-minded padres during the war that they were good fellows. Or there might be the terrible suspicion that the minister was tolerant of a glass of beer; or even the damning accusation that he did not think a tot of whiskey sinful. Which of all these accusations prompted the taunting of Christ? We may quite reasonably argue that it was none other than the last. It certainly signified something. It certainly was not in praise of him. There remains the last — that he did not think the publicans and harlots sinful as the scribes and Pharisees thought them sinful.

Let us read again what he says: *John came neither eating nor drinking . . . the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say . . . a friend of publicans and sinners.* Why did Jesus eat and drink? Was it not because he saw nothing wrong in either eating or drinking?

Why was he so often found eating and drinking with publicans and harlots? Was it not because he liked the company of publicans and harlots? Maybe he liked their company a great deal better than the company of his critics. Maybe he did not think their sins quite so blatant or damning as the sins of the religious men of his day. Perhaps he thought an honest harlot refreshing company after that of a hypocritical priest. Perhaps he was a friend of publicans and sinners because he genuinely liked them, not as a pitying philanthropist, not as the redeeming Son of God, but as a human being.

Then there are the occasional anecdotes, which have strayed, we do not know whence, into the Gospels. They were unquestionably anecdotes commonly told about Jesus by the crowd of his day, and the crowd may have exaggerated — it may even have lied, as crowds generally do. But there is often more truth in the legends of the common people than in the sober statements of learned men. And it certainly seems here as if the Evangelists inserted these things because they were too strong to be resisted, or because they did not understand them, or because they thought they might be

interpreted in the newer theological manner. But why did Christ say to the woman taken in adultery, *Neither do I condemn thee?* It is always presumed that he had some subtle reason, for her reformation or for the discomfiture of her accusers. What if it were merely the simple truth? What if to his unbiased and farseeing eye there had been reasons for her moral weakness, reasons which he felt he could not condemn? What if this spiritual genius saw that even the harlotry of a harlot did not kill the living impulses of a soul as did the theological subtleties of the chief priests? The point can hardly be pressed home more strongly than by contrasting the attitude of some modern preacher of righteousness. The fact of adultery, grieving God and damning the soul to hell, would be the one thing that mattered. No extenuating circumstances could in his eyes do away with her rightful condemnation. Under no circumstances would he say, "Neither do I condemn thee." And is not this because this particular sin has an aspect for a modern minister which it had not for the historical Christ?

Or take the question of the forgiveness of sin. If we can believe the records, Jesus forgave a

number of people their sins, from the man sick of a palsy to the thief upon the cross, but in no single instance did he allege as the reason for forgiveness what is urged by the modern Church as necessary. The most outstanding and all but incredible example occurs in a no less known and widely used document than the Lord's Prayer. It is amazing that the import of it has escaped us. Here was, if we accept the Authorized Version, the Great Galilean teaching his followers to ask forgiveness of their God. And on what reason are they to base their plea to God for his forgiveness? A Salvation Army captain would say, "Pray thus: 'Father, forgive us our trespasses because of the sacrifice of thy Son on the cross.'" A Catholic priest would say, "Pray thus: 'Father, forgive us our trespasses because we unfeignedly believe in the Church, and have used, or are willing to use, the sacraments.'" There can hardly be a minister who would not teach his people to say, "Pray thus: 'Forgive us our trespasses because we repent and have faith in thy Son, and will not trespass again.'" But Jesus said: "Say ye, 'Forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive them that trespass against us.*'" This can only mean that the reason we

should urge for our own forgiveness is that we have forgiven others. It may even mean that the measure of forgiveness we should demand is the measure of forgiveness we have granted. In either case the underlying thought is, as it were, social, and not theological; it is as far removed as possible from the idea of an angry God who needs propitiation through the blood of a victim. Even more strikingly it does more than suggest, it definitely implies, another attitude toward sin altogether.

And so with the rest of the stories. It is a mere assumption that Jesus forgave the sick of the palsy because of his faith or the faith of his friends. Apparently he simply saw that the sickness of the man's spirit stood in greater need of healing than the sickness of his body. He waits for neither repentance nor faith, still less for theological acceptance of the atonement, but as simply as he says later, *Rise, take up thy bed, and walk*, he says now, *Thy sins be forgiven thee.* It was as if he freed the man from a distorted mind as he later freed him from a distorted body. Or the thief on the cross. It is mere supposition that the thief either repented of his robberies, or accepted the atonement, or

made any gesture whatsoever toward the theological conception of forgiveness. He simply echoed the current speech of the crowd that had heard Jesus talk of his spiritual kingdom. That was enough for Jesus. As to the woman who anointed him in the house of the Pharisee, — a harlot, it is presumed, of many loves, — he said that her sins were forgiven because she loved much. What does this mean but that a loving heart toward men, even in harlotry, was enough to occasion her forgiveness? The common sense of it is that she must have cheated, she must have lied, she must have been hypocritical as all harlots sometimes have to be. These were bad "sins" which impeded her spiritual life, but they were eclipsed by the fact that she had honestly loved, and that she loved even a man scorned by the rich and religious, increasingly facing an enmity which might mean death.

There are so many straws blowing on this wind that one does not know how to reckon them all. There is the gospel of forgiveness until seventy times seven, to which nothing like justice has ever been done. Christ's words do not admit of any modification or belittling. They were apparently meant to be applicable to all the

varied circumstances of life. The only hope for a sinner, Jesus thought, lay in other men's habitually and constantly forgiving him, as indeed their own hope of forgiveness lay in such conduct. "How often, O Lord, shall we forgive a German submarine captain who sinks a hospital ship? Until he has sunk seven hospital ships?" "Verily I say unto you, until he has sunk seventy times seven." "How often, O Lord, shall we forgive a man who has sinned against a woman by making the mistake of asking her to marry him? Seven times?" "Never!" says the modern priest. "It is irrevocable." "Never!" says the modern magistrate. "Let him pay alimony for the rest of his life."

Such illustrations as these will be read with a smile, but they are not written with a smile. The implication of them is much too serious. The implication of the Christian religion is that the sin behind them is too monstrous and fettering, too altogether a question of an outraged God, for any other attitude save its attitude to be possible. The sacrifice of blood is a necessity. But all this is additional, not to say foreign, to the mind we dimly glimpse of the historical Christ. His was the mind that argued appar-

ently in some such way as the following:[1] "The righteousness of the spiritually alive man must exceed the righteousness of the normally accepted religious man. He cannot enter into the real Kingdom of the Spirit unless it does. Thus the normally religious man says, 'You shall do no murder,' because that is the commandment of God, and its breach incurs his wrath. But I say unto you that it is enormously more important that a man shall not be angry with his brother. It is useless for him to approach God at all unless peace reigns in his heart. The normally religious man says, 'You shall not commit adultery,' because it is a breach of the Law of God and incurs his anger. But I say unto you that for a man to lust after a woman, like a brute beast only, is just as harmful to his spiritual life as you think the sin of adultery is."

The man who said these words was not, if we may so express it, a theologically-minded man, but a socially-minded man. His social-mindedness was also a spiritual-mindedness. It soared infinitely above the petty-mindedness of the Church in our own or any age. He was two

[1] We quote from the document "Q," as indicated by Matthew v. 20 and following.

thousand years and more before his time. It is small wonder that neither his followers nor his enemies understood him in his own day, for we, who would be as liberal as he, fail to understand him in ours. He went lonely in those days, and he goes lonely in these. His is and was the loneliness of a spiritual genius whose like has not been seen on earth, and of which we may well think that we shall never see the like again.

We shall have more to say in the next chapter of the implications of this last quotation from "Q," but it is impossible to pass over here the misinterpretation which theological ideas of sin and repentance have caused the Church to read into it. Christ said, *Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* The Church promptly read this as if it said: "Whosoever looketh upon a woman to love her, especially if she be married, committeth adultery already with her in his heart. If she be not already married, he does not commit adultery if he marries her before he has slept with her. That is, provided the marriage agrees with the regulations which we have laid down." Practically, this is not too

harsh an interpretation of the Church's attitude, and historically, the Church made more of a muddle of it even than this. A Catholic monk was warned never even to look at a woman. But not only is this absurdity un-Christlike; the whole attitude of conventional orthodox religion entirely misses the point.

Here is Jesus, a spiritually-minded genius, whose whole voice and conduct is a proclamation that devotion to the material things of life is a degradation of man's true nature likely to lead ultimately to irrevocable loss. On fire with this idea, he wades unhesitatingly through all material interpretations of God's Law, through all notions of right and wrong conceived in terms of God as a judge and meticulous despot, and through all restraints upon the spiritual life, however plausible, however hallowed by tradition, or however politic they may seem. To him, the sins that matter are the sins that hamper the growth of this spiritual life in a man's own soul, or that, committed by him, hamper the growth of his brother's soul. It is thus of man, rather than of God, that man has primarily to ask forgiveness, and he can neither ask for forgiveness nor expect it unless he has for-

given. We cannot doubt that part of the topsy-turviness of the world to Jesus was precisely this: A man might grind the faces of the poor, and be accounted righteous if he wore a small box upon his head containing a few words of Holy Scripture. A woman might have no love in her heart toward her husband, and even nag at him from morning till night, and be accounted righteous if she had been married by the Law of Moses and kept the observances of that Law. But a man whom the hard law of necessity had driven to unpopular service of the Roman conqueror, no matter what else he was or did, was a publican and outcast. A man who foolishly drank too many cups of the good wine of the earth in the hour of his necessary ease was damned before God, no matter what his other virtues. A woman who committed the animal act of copulation outside the formal Law was damned to eternity, no matter how generous and loving her heart might be. It was against all this that Christ protested.

In the face even of such scanty evidence as we have, we cannot doubt that the historical Christ would dissent as vehemently from the judgments the Church to-day makes in the name of the

traditional Christ as he dissented from those of the scribes and Pharisees two thousand years ago. He would think that we had got the whole thing topsy-turvy. He would think that we were condoning glaring sins in our haste to condemn moral weaknesses which are not, rightly understood, sins at all. He would think that modern Christians, in their eagerness not to bring a frown upon the face of their Heavenly Father, had forgotten the evil of bringing tears into the eyes of their brethren. He would think that in pleading the merits of his death upon the cross for our forgiveness we had forgotten the essential teaching of his Gospel. He would not draw aside, as if there were nothing to be said for them, from the prostitutes of Piccadilly, or turn from jovial men whose main fault is their incredible blindness to the things that really matter in life. But he might enter Westminster Abbey with a scourge of small cords in his hand.

V

CHRIST AND SEX

Jesus was undoubtedly a spiritual genius of the highest order — as we Westerns have a right to think, the greatest spiritual genius that the world has ever seen. But genius commonly has its limitations as well as its powers. We laughingly associate with it a forgetfulness of meals and a carelessness about the litter in the study, but deeper than this goes, not infrequently, a certain carelessness in human relationships. The great artist does put his art first, the great musician his music. It does often mean more to him than father or mother or wife or children. And the fact that religion has made many a lovable saint a little inhuman is simply this fact all over again. Religion is to the spiritual genius what music or art or literature is to the genius of another order.

Now Jesus was certainly a little less of a humanist in the measure that he was a little

more of a genius. We should like to know more of his relationships as a man toward women — whether he was ever stirred by them as all of us are stirred; whether that peculiar thing we call womanliness had its effect on him also; whether, that is to say, he responded at all to sex. And while it must be admitted that there is little evidence one way or the other to be deduced from the scanty records of the historical Christ, at least we may well revolt from the attitude which the Church has imputed to the traditional Christ.

The Church was almost at once debarred from the very mention of Christ and sex in one breath by the supposition that he was the Second Person of the Trinity. The Jewish mind had passed beyond thinking, as it once thought, that a Son of God could be attracted by the daughters of men, however fair, and the conception of Jesus even falling in love, let alone marrying, seemed to churchmen then, as it would seem to them to-day, merely blasphemous. Freud had not been born, and the early doctors of the Church could think of the Babe in the arms of his mother without imputing to either the least suspicion of sexual emotion. But even

so, the thing was peculiarly abhorrent to them. Despite many a story of illicit and licit love in the Old Testament, and despite a love song attributed to Solomon that even reads a little improperly to modern Christian sensibilities, the religious Jew always comes before us as a hard man, a little repellent in his human relationships. One of the greatest prophets is said to have picked up and married a prostitute at the command of Jehovah, and religious Jews did not see that by so doing he would have debased marriage and sacrificed a woman's heart to the grim necessities of a prophetic parable. And this trait seems to have been inherited by the early Church.

If it was inherited, it was very soon enormously developed. Signs of an unbalanced mind in this regard are not uncommon. True, the Church frowned upon it — but a great churchman resorted to a surgical operation that he might escape sexual temptation. One great sect of Christians prohibited marriage altogether, indifferent to the fact that their prohibition would have ended the race, seeing that they anticipated the end and the coming of the Lord Jesus very shortly anyhow. Soon the great

hermitical and monastic movements were not merely to be celibate but to be sex-insane. Saint Anthony may be fictitious, but he was held up as a mirror in the mediæval Church, and on Mount Athos they do not allow a hen, let alone a woman, to this day! Modern Catholicism has entered into this inheritance. Marriage may be a holy sacrament, but celibacy is a nobler state. No priest may marry, and marriage with the Heavenly Bridegroom is the highest state to which a man or a woman can look forward.

It is commonly our boast that from these excesses Protestantism has turned, but we should hesitate a little before we sing our own praises too highly. Whether or not it was a noble thing for the monk Luther to seduce a nun from her vows and marry her is open to question, but in any case we may well think that for Protestant bishops to take the line they do upon marriage reform is a curiously un-Christ-like thing. In England, Protestant bishops have recently cried out in horror, in the name of Christ, against the release of a woman from her certified lunatic husband, and Anglicanism is adamant in coupling together in their union,

however loveless, any man and woman who have slipped into a legal marriage. And where that attitude is breaking down, it is breaking down before the clamor of expediency rather than before any sense of another mind in Christ.

We may suspect that something of this attitude was already at work when the Gospels came to be written. It is, for example, an odd thing that, while every other human type appears to pass before Jesus, the commonest human type is absent. He met soldiers and lawyers, taxgatherers and prostitutes, mothers and widows, workmen and little children, beggars and kings, Jews and Gentiles and Samaritans, but a pair of human lovers would seem never to have come his way. Yet it is unthinkable that he would have had nothing to say to them. It is unthinkable that while he could have treated the human soul in all its needs he could have remained indifferent to its greatest cause for exaltation and sorrow. If he was never in love with a woman himself, he was no man at all if he did not know that the average man usually is. If sex was a secondary thing to him, he would have been a nincompoop if he

had not been aware that it was a primary thing in most men's lives.

We have seen how full of radiant common sense he was, and how contemptuous of traditional religious observances which fettered the free spirit of man — and yet tradition would have it that upon this subject alone he was harsh and unbending and did but tighten the fetters. The Jews of his day thought that Moses had prescribed ceremonies and washings and Sabbatical observances of the minutest character. All these he brushed aside in the interests of freedom and true spirituality. But Moses had permitted "a bill of divorcement," and this Christ would not permit. Here and here alone he tightened the bonds, and we are asked to believe that, if Moses had seen in sex a human temptation, Christ made of it a human sin.

Now from all this those of us who follow the historical Christ in the first place instinctively shrink. It does not agree with his general character. We may concede that because he was a genius in religion he was probably like every other genius in everything else. Probably in his own mind and to his own spirit sex was a secondary issue, as was often also the need to

eat and drink and the comfort of a home. In a thousand of the world's great men who are not religious at all we observe the same phenomenon; there is nothing revolting or unusual about it. The marvel with Christ is that, despite this, there has, as it were, flickered through the obscuring portraiture of the Church glimpses of a most humane man. He may conceivably have said, "If a man hate not parents and wife and children for my sake, he cannot be my disciple," but many a great painter has said the like to his pupils, and many a general to his soldiers. But this same man loved little children, and would have been singularly inconsistent if he had not loved lovers; this same man appears to have welcomed the ministrations of women whenever they were feasible during his earthly life; this same man sought in a home in Bethany not merely, as the Church would have us think, the consolations of religion, but the sometimes humanly peevish housewifeliness of its mistress; and whenever this same man is confronted with what our religious world calls "erring womanhood," he is very far from behaving like a mediæval monk or even a modern Puritan. The record which makes the women of Jerusalem

weep over him, and the women of his entourage alone remain faithful to him on the cross, is a likely one. They loved him. And women do not love a Saint Anthony or an Ignatius de Loyola, even though they often love the hand that beats them.

That he went to the house of Simon and healed his mother-in-law is another straw drifting on this wind. The materials are so scant that we may be forgiven if we seem to make too much of so slight a story as this, but it is the only traditional record we have of the entry of Jesus into the marital relationships of his disciples. It may be, indeed, almost laughable to us Protestants that the Catholic commentators should have shrunk from the implications of the story, but then they scarcely liked Peter to have a wife any more than they would like a modern Pope to have a mistress. The great Foundation Apostle ought to have been sufficiently spiritual to be a celibate, or at least, after his call by Christ, sufficiently spiritual to set little store on his marriage. Imagine with what sternness a mediæval Hildebrand would have visited Peter's wife's mother even although she was sick with a great fever. But the record

tenderly has it that Jesus came and took her by the hand and raised her up, and, when the fever had left her, gladly stayed on to be ministered unto by her. The point is not that we have any right to make much of these and similar instances, but that we unquestionably have the right to deny to others the right to make of him a celibate ascetic in the face of them.

On the attitude of Jesus toward sexual sin we have already spoken, but let us examine a little more closely his attitude toward sexual legalities. Did he really tighten the bonds of marriage? Can the modern Church so rigidly annex him as a support against divorce, and as champion of all the human sorrows that result from our modern marriage system? For let us not blind ourselves to the fact that this language is not too strong. Indissoluble marriage has resulted among us in a million homes from which love has flown out of the window — or at least indissoluble marriage condemns to lives of lovelessness a million homes from which love has definitely flown, whether through ignorance or through foolishness or through sin. Husbands admittedly ought to love their wives, and wives their husbands, but, unfortunately, a

dictum of Saint Paul's can no more control the flood of human feeling than could Canute the sea. Men and women ought not to be deceived in each other, or to enter lightly upon the obligations of marriage, but then, unfortunately, men and women are as much the victims of sex as its controllers. Unfortunately, they marry in youth, which is not likely to be a wise age or a temperate, as long as the world endures. The Church's may well be a counsel of perfection, but if Christ had any common sense at all he knew better than the Church that perfection has not yet been reached among us. Was the Great Physician harsh and unbending in this the greatest of human sicknesses?

Now even the document "Q" appears to have contained the seemingly hard saying that everyone that shall put away his wife and marry another is committing adultery, and that he who marries her that is put away is committing adultery, but these words immediately follow upon a saying which traditional Christianity, as we have seen in the last chapter, has indubitably misunderstood. If Christ was anything at all, he was essentially a genius in spiritual things — we might say again "a spiritually-

minded man" if the words in our day had not taken on a priggish and pious tone. But he was not a prig, and the religious leaders of his day would not even have called him pious. As a matter of fact, they charged him with the exact reverse. But we know that it was the things of man's spirit as contrasted with the things of his body that interested him and which he thought of value. His whole Gospel was the teaching of a mode of life and of an attitude toward the things of life which he thought made for the growth of the spirit. The kingdom which he proclaimed and for which he tried to prepare us was a kingdom in which the things of the spirit stood first, and which he inevitably contrasted with the kingdoms of the world, in which the things of the body stood first.

Now the vivid contrast in the mind of Christ in this matter of sexual relationships was undoubtedly the contrast between mere animal and bodily desire, which, if entirely alone and unsupported, he called lust, and that union of two human spirits, which we call love. Jesus did not put out of his thoughts actual bodily union between a man and a woman, though that is an essentially animal act — as much an

animal act as eating and drinking. He would not have been a man of common sense if he had done so. But he undoubtedly wished to see it coupled with what in common speech we call love. It was indeed love in all human relationships that he continually exalted. He thought that we human beings grievously failed precisely in this — that we excluded love from our relationships. He had it that even between a man and his enemy there should be love. It is incredible that he did not take for granted that there should be love between a man and his wife.

When he spoke of marriage he meant a bodily union between a man and a woman in love, and while such unions were made openly, in his day as in ours, under legal and ecclesiastical sanctions, it is at least by no manner of means sure that he would have considered, as does the Church to-day, that the absence of such sanctions was ultimately of more importance than the absence of love. We may, indeed, claim that it was wholly contrary to him to have thought so. He said roundly that many of God's religious ordinances, conceived for the comfort and well-being of the spirits of men, had been made of no effect through the traditions

of accepted religion, and when this was the case he had no hesitation whatever in setting on one side the most sacrosanct of such traditions. We cannot doubt that modern marriage might have been to him a similar case. If the traditions of the Church, supported by the law, condemn men and women to unions from which love is lacking, he would unquestionably brush them on one side as so many cobwebs.

With these considerations in mind, read again the famous passage. Did he mean what religion in our day would have us believe that he meant? Did he not rather mean: "I say unto you that if a man and a woman have entered upon a bodily and spiritual union in love, and if one of these two, for the sake of mere lust, breaks that union, he or she is guilty of as great a sin as that which you commonly call adultery; and if a third party interferes to support that breach by marrying the one put away, he is a partner in that sin." The men of his own day may not indeed have understood him so, but he was two thousand years ahead of them, and what of all his sayings did they understand? The organized Church, which sprang into existence so soon after his death and claimed him for her own,

did not so understand him either. But what of that? That Church has made a hundred other monstrous mistakes, and it is not wonderful that she made a mistake in this.

If we should claim the historical Jesus as the advocate of free love, both the religious and the secular world would be astonished, not to say horrified. But it is something like this that we do claim. After all, we have just as much right on our part to be astonished and horrified that the Devil should be claimed as its advocate, as to-day he undoubtedly is. It is this kind of incredible topsy-turvydom from which Jesus would have delivered us, but in which the Church has more deeply involved us than ever. Free love is precisely the only sort of love worth having, and, indeed, the only kind of love that can exist. If you want to destroy love or drive it out of the window before you know where you are, deny to it its freedom. Love is as sensitive to freedom as a photographic plate to light. It is the air it breathes, the condition under which it is born, the environment in which it must live. These are the facts of the case. Make what regulations and arrangements you please, but primarily this must be kept in mind.

Free love does not mean promiscuous lust. The two things are indeed absolutely contradictory, as contradictory as any two things can be. They are not synonymous because a number, or even the majority of mankind, confuse them, and we should be in a pretty pass if we had to abandon every true and beautiful thing because there are bestial and brutish men in the world who trample upon it. It is precisely this mistake which religion has most unfortunately made. General Booth once defended the popular songs of the Salvation Army by saying that he did not see why the Devil should have all the good tunes, and we may as well retort that we do not see why we should give up free love because the Devil has persuaded religious men that it means promiscuous lust. In this matter of sex relationships preëminently, we are not going to abandon our Christ to prejudice or bigotry or the dust and dirt of time. In this matter he has been two thousand years under the great stone that religious men, in the carefulness of their mistaken love, rolled before the door of his sepulchre, and which the law for mixed motives signed and sealed. But it is the dawn of the third day, and it is time that Christ rose from the dead.

But let us leave fine words and come down to practical facts. The mistake which the Church has made, and in which it has been aided and abetted by the law ever since Constantine saw the wisdom of enlisting popular sentiment by putting the cross above the symbol of imperial power, is this — that it has taken for granted that every marriage which it solemnizes is a true marriage. No two human beings who have ever been unquestionably in love, who have known the depths and wonder that are possible in the union of two souls, can doubt that those whom God has *thus* joined together cannot be put asunder. But to say that every two human beings who approach a magistrate or who stand before a priest and take a traditional and often impossible vow dictated to them are thereby indissolubly joined together by God is to say something at which the world of free men and women will one day ring with Homeric laughter. It is simply the commonest of common knowledge, not only that men and women approach the magistrate or priest again and again, for mixed or unworthy motives, but that it is characteristic of us poor humans that when under the influence of sex or when in the heyday of youth we

most often do not know our own minds. It is also unfortunately true that even when we do know them, we sometimes come to change them. This holy and beautiful thing which we call love, and which — make no mistake — can and does actually exist in the world, is not commonly the affair of a moment, or even a spontaneous thing. Two persons may love at first sight, but it is much more frequent that love grows slowly between them. Seeing that it is compacted of understanding and unselfishness, this is not strange. It is a parable of love that a child does not instantaneously appear upon the physical union of a man and woman, but that slow months must pass before its birth.

The nature of love would thus seem to indicate the advisability of trial marriages, of unions dissoluble until they have proved themselves to be indissoluble in their own nature. But on the other hand, we should be blind indeed if we did not admit that the nature of men and the perversity of things as they are raise a thousand difficulties to the adoption of such a state of affairs. Such a freeing of love would seem to open the door to the opportunities of ill-disposed and evilly-minded men and women; and even

apart from this, there is the economic and social difficulty of the birth of children. This is admittedly another instance of the blindness of Nature. It is an additional reason why modern minds cannot identify Nature, as our forefathers did, with Providence, or even as Jesus appears to have done, with a Heavenly Father. Nature ought to reward only a spiritual and bodily union in love with the gift of a child, but unfortunately she so equally rewards the union conceived in a drunken fit or in simple animal lust. Why things should be so arranged opens up questions beyond the scope of this little book, and quite possibly beyond our solution in this state of our knowledge, but from them two considerations emerge.

The first, very briefly, is the modern attitude that Nature requires taking into control, and that it is madness of the highest order to give her free rein. We have made the earth as habitable as it is to-day because we have deliberately attempted to control and direct the forces of Nature. We do not give up that attempt because Nature is occasionally too strong for us and despite our best efforts hands us out a flood or a drought or an earthquake or a plague of flies,

but this matter of birth control is a matter on which we have scarcely as yet dared to tackle her. Common-sense men and women are increasingly coming to feel that we ought to do so, but unfortunately two lions still roar in the path of these new Christians. And what a tragedy it is that one is too often religion, and the other, often, law!

But the second consideration is this. It is precisely in such dilemmas that the historical Christ gives us a lead. His genius had no two opinions at all upon the matter. When to his keen spiritual sense the obvious path seemed impracticable, he never turned back. It is for this reason that we are confronted with the difficulties of the Sermon on the Mount. The world has listened aghast to the saying, *Love your enemies*, more especially as he was not content to leave it at that, but plunged straight into illustrations and practical applications. "If your enemy strike you on one cheek, love him and turn to him the other also." "If a robber on the highway demand of you your cloak, give to him your coat also." "Blessed are ye, poor . . . hungry . . . persecuted . . . for great is your reward in the spiritual life."

"But this is impractical!" cries the astonished world. The historical Jesus shrugs his shoulders: "So much the worse for practical things."

We are men of free will. We can, if we like, turn from the following of the historical to bow down before the traditional Jesus. In that case we shall tighten our existing marriage laws and sign protests with our bishops against divorce. But let us not deceive ourselves: we have no right to claim the authority of the Great Galilean. He would not have thought hardly of a man and woman living together in love, although to do so they had had to set on one side legal and ecclesiastical traditions. He would have wished to snap the fetters of the scribes and Pharisees which bind together many a loveless marriage. He might even have gone further and preached a revolt, urging that free men and women seeking to lead the spiritual life should not submit for the sake of their brethren to the imposition of these traditions. It would have made no difference to him that such a course of conduct would have invited calumny, and even persecution. He might even be heard saying in that resolute voice of his, *Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

VI

THE CHRIST EXPERIMENT

We are thus now in a position to see the historical Jesus against the background of his time and age, which is really as much as we can hope to do. From a handful of his sayings and a number of dubious stories it is not possible to construct a biography, but it is possible to form an estimate of the value of the man. It is only this which it is open to us to do in the case of the Great Galilean.

It is evident that the gospel of Jesus was not a theological theory so much as a social and spiritual experiment, and the main thing to be said about that experiment is that it has never been tried. Jesus himself was not so much prophet or priest as spiritual reformer, not to say social revolutionary, and the reception which the world gave him was the cross. The world of his day thought thus and then to put a summary end to him and his teaching, and it succeeded better

than it knew. The gospel which within a few years was called his, and the Church which within a few years made him her own, were not his, and had really little to do with him. They made Calvary the important Mount, whereas the important Mount in the historical story of Jesus is the Mount of the Sermon. Christians in all ages have been asked to gather about that little hill outside the city walls and to gaze upon the cross which crowns it, but that hill is in reality a scene from which we should turn with gladness, and that bloody cross a thing which it would be a relief if we could forget.

Incidentally, the odd muddle into which the Pauline Christology landed the Church has no equal. Traditional Christianity is bound to think at one and the same time that Judas Iscariot and Pontius Pilate were two of the blackest rogues in history and yet actually the instruments of our salvation; the Roman soldiers who drove the nails into the hands and feet of Jesus were at once bloodstained ruffians and servants of the will of God. In Pauline theology Jesus had been sent by his Father into the world in order to mount the cross and die for our sins; hence Calvary was not so much

the scene of a tragedy as the scene of the consummation of an age-long plan of God's. A curious unreality thus attaches to the story of the betrayal, the judgment, the condemnation, and the execution, for it was all taking place according to plan, and if any actor had failed in his part the direst consequences would have resulted. Thus if Pilate had said, "I find no fault in him; he is an innocent man, and I am going to back his release and protection from harm with all the might of the Roman Empire," then the whole world must have perished in Hell. It is from speculations such as these that one turns gladly away, with a reeling brain and a bewildered imagination.

The truth is, Calvary was an unredeemed and stark tragedy because it was the nipping of an experiment in the bud and the execution of the experimenter. It put an end to Jesus and to the gospel of Jesus for close on two thousand years, and it is possible that it may have put an end to both for all time. It is possible that both are only going to survive in a few volumes on the top shelves of studies. But it is possible that in that case their repose will not be long, as we shall see in a moment.

Now of course this saying that the gospel of Jesus has never been properly tried is, in a sense, no new one. We are credibly told that there are some four hundred variants of Christianity in the world, and each sect supposes that it is the one and only true "gospel" of Jesus. The cry of the Protestant reformers was that they were the true Christians, not to say the true Catholics, and every sect that has broken off from the Protestant bodies has broken off under the same delusion. But if it is true that the historical Jesus was as he has been depicted in these chapters, then it is true that all forms of Christianity have alike mistaken him. The initial wrong step was taken when he was deified, and it was made irrevocable when he was identified by Paul and others with that divine victim for whom the Gentile world had long been looking and that Messiah for whom in its turn the Jewish world had hoped. The latter idea floated the Church; the former ensured its immediate and startling success. But the Church thus launched was based upon a mistake. Jesus was not a God, but a man. He was a victim, to be sure, but not God's foreordained victim. The crowd about the cross was

mistaken: his gospel had saved himself, though he died for it; but others as yet he could not save.

The interesting thing is that the apostles, led by Paul, did the very thing which the true genius of Jesus had prevented him from doing. His spiritual genius knew beyond question that deep seated in itself was, primarily, a new outlook upon life which had nothing to do with any old outlook connected with either Messiahship or divine victims. His mission, it knew, was to live sanely in a world of insane men; was to view things as they really were in a world of topsy-turvydom; was to maintain unbent his will, and undistorted his mind, in a world in which all motives were mixed and all minds diseased. The rôle of physician was, as it were, automatically thrust upon Jesus: he cured by simply being himself, or, as it is beautifully said, though it be but a parable, to touch but the hem of his garment was to be conscious of his power. In all probability the very human conflict of his entire life lay in the seeming reasonableness of his accepting that other rôle of Messiah, and yet in the intense inner conviction of his genius that this was not his rôle.

He must have been Jew enough to wonder himself if he were not the Messiah; he was genius enough to know that he was something more. But if he were Messiah, then, said his human reasonableness, he ought to act in such and such a manner; but, argued his spiritual genius, you know that that course is not for you.

To this we shall return, for it is of course the most fascinating of all speculations, as it is also, if correct, the key to the whole enigma. It was this which naturally puzzled his own followers in his day. The question upon their lips was always, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* To their incredible perplexity, he would never take the first step in that direction. When the crowd wanted to take him and make him king, he departed into foreign quarters, trailed after by a band of disconsolate followers. When he rode up the Messianic city *upon a colt the foal of an ass*, under waving palms and acclaimed by hosannas, he had only to say the word to pass on triumphantly to the throne of David; but he appears to have slipped aside on the brink of the hill overlooking the city, where he sat down and wept, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered*

thy children . . . and ye would not! When he stood lonely and on the verge of desertion in the Garden of Gethsemane, he said to the only one who drew a sword in his behalf: *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?* As the child of his age, he believed it; but as a spiritual genius he never said the word. It was his human triumph that he died silent, and even undismayed.

But the perplexity of his followers passed all bounds. It was the so much lesser genius of Paul that surmounted the obstacle. He could not stomach it that the experiment had never been tried and that the Great Galilean had perished. There must be, he argued, some other explanation. He found it in the assumption that this was a divine victim who had come to die, and that it was by rising from the dead that the Messiah was to come into his own. Even this theory suffered a shock when the risen Jesus did not return with the angels on the clouds of glory within the lifetime of the apostles. But the stubborn Church was equal to the occasion. In its turn, it could not admit that Saint Paul had been wrong. The truth must be either —

or both — that the Church was to be purged by an age of persecution, or that the Church itself was to carve out a kingdom for the Messiah. Either supposition would merely postpone that triumphal return which is still the faith of the Church in our own day.

But all these were fantasies. The truth was much simpler. The spiritual genius of Jesus had another remedy for the world's ills. It would have initiated an experiment that was essentially social and was bound to become political. But that experiment was an astonishing one, as was natural, since it was the experiment of a genius, and a spiritual genius at that. There was never a remote hope that it would be tried in his own day; there is only a remote hope that it will be tried in ours. Any time in the last two thousand years it has seemed too revolutionary to be attempted. Traditional Christianity has even done its best to disassociate the name of Jesus from it, or to interpret the words of the historical Jesus in such a way that he would be relieved from the opprobrium of having suggested it. And in our turn we may at least as well admit this — that it is still dubious whether it would be successful.

A reader can judge for himself. Jesus thought the road to the world's peace lay in the sinking of all men-of-war and the disbandment of all armies. He was not such a fool as to suppose that so dramatic a course might not still leave a predatory nation or two, but he maintained that the suppression of that predatory nation by force was not the way to conquer it. It was rather to suffer, and by suffering to convert it. He maintained that the way to reform the evil heart of man was not by ever more stringent and meticulous police and ecclesiastical regulations, but by leavening the whole lump by means of the example of a few, living for spiritual things, in the freedom of a spiritual outlook. And he seems to have thought that it was never of any use to commence at the top and enforce the gospel of the Spirit on mankind from above, but rather to begin from below, in one heart, and let the fair tree grow till the very fowls of the air would take refuge in its branches.

It is not, of course, to be wondered at that the world of his day, in so far as it was aware of him at all, thought the whole scheme revolutionary, not to say blasphemous. It either believed with Saint Paul, that the powers which be are

ordained of God, or with his early friends and later enemies, that, while the powers which were, were of the Devil, God would shortly establish other powers not essentially different in scope and function from them. And the world ever since has concurred in their verdict. It has never seemed to it that the programme of Jesus was practical. Here and there odd bands of Christians, or a Tolstoy, have subscribed to something like it, but it must be admitted that their adherence has usually been mixed with original fantasies, or that they have never even preached it on a wide scale. In any case, the world has either persecuted them out of existence or laughed them out of court.

There would be no particular reason why the world of our time should not do the same in this the close of the second "day" since the historical Christ was laid in the tomb, if it were not for one consideration. We have seen that the historical Jesus, when all men said to him that his ideas were not practical, shrugged his shoulders, as it were, and said in effect: "So much the worse for practical things!" In other words, he maintained that the experiment the world was conducting was not so successful as it thought

it was. He did not think that it would ultimately put things to rights; and in this particular we are, for the first time since he lived, coming to agree with him.

One can imagine how the Roman laughed him to scorn, and how the parasites of the Roman agreed with him. Pilate was too sure of himself even to take the trouble to be contemptuous, and much too proud to be uncivil; the puppet king, Herod, set Jesus at naught and mocked him. To both of them it seemed that the experiment of the Roman Empire was, on the contrary, extraordinarily successful and as sure as the everlasting hills. As a matter of history, the whole of Europe agreed with them to such an extent that it could not believe that that experiment had failed even when it had obviously not only failed but been abandoned. It had but suffered a sea change, they maintained. We can see that the mediæval Papacy was "the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned upon its grave." Even when Europeans came to see how unsuccessful was that experiment also, our forefathers did not turn back to the suggestion of Jesus. They experimented, instead, with theories of nationality and the balance of power. Politi-

cally, they maintained that the shortest way to peace was to go ever more heavily armed; that the shortest way with robber nations was to crush them ever more bloodily; that the best way to suppress crime was not merely to hang a man for murder, but to hang him for stealing a sheep; that the shortest way to suppress promiscuous lust was to ascribe free love to the Devil; that the best way between Capital and Labor was *laissez faire* — or, let the Devil take the weakest.

But far from being convinced that these later experiments have been successful, we are quite sure that they at least are unsuccessful. We have but just emerged from the Great War, and we have not yet done with the Communist Revolution. Jesus was right: it *has* proved so much the worse for practical things. And it is not only an obscure parson or writer or two who stands aghast at the prospect of continuing to experiment "practically."

It is here that one trembles at one's impotence and seeks wildly for the words of power that shall shake the world and wake it from its sleep. It is horrifying that while the graves of we do not know how many millions of men, women,

and children are still green, the world can dance and sing upon them. It is only yesterday that we shuddered at the shambles of Gallipoli and the hecatombs of Verdun, but England is spending one hundred and fifteen millions annually on its navy, as compared with seventy-seven millions in 1913, and France is straining every nerve to keep in being an even greater army than before the war. It is literally only yesterday that the millions of England were on the brink of starvation through the submarine campaign, but our statesmen and our admirals can break off a Disarmament Conference because they are still under the impression that the way to escape such horror lies in armed cruisers. And an admiral of the post-war United States Navy has said: "Senator Lodge had called the treaty for the limitation of naval armaments an experiment. It was an experiment — a dangerous one. They say that a great navy means war. Why, the reverse is the fact: a great navy means peace. The United States is the only nation fitted to have a large navy. It is a high-minded nation. The other countries do not speak the same language. We ought to have the biggest navy and the biggest army in the

world, so that we shall be able to enforce our influence."

Yet one of the greatest of English statesmen can surrender his ministerial office because he honestly thinks that the experiment we are making is a disastrous one which will inevitably doom "not only the existence of the British Empire, but even that of European civilization itself." And these words are not the kind of "hot air" to which we have been accustomed on the lips of demagogues anxious to take lucrative office but part of a private letter to the Prime Minister from the pen of a Conservative minister resigning for this reason his emoluments and position. The words deserve quotation on every possible occasion.

And if this is the day when we can perhaps face for the first time since Christ's death the failure of great political experiments, it is also the day in which we are facing the failure of economic experiments. The theory that wealth is an excellent thing, and that success lies in getting rich, is at least on the brink of as disastrous a failure as that of the policy of armed nations. The Communist Revolution is not for better distribution of wealth, but for the

reward of the good and the estimation of success in other terms altogether than those of money. Here, indeed, the world is less sure that its experiment has failed; on the contrary, it is at the present hugging itself with satisfaction that the Communist experiment has failed. But the remarkable thing is that there persists an element among high and low, rich and poor, which disassociates itself from the political upheaval connected with Russia, but is inclined to put its faith in the general proposition that we have got wealth into a wrong perspective, and that not only are we not distributing it properly, but we are not envisaging it correctly. This conviction rumbles beneath labor troubles throughout the world, and while in the East it is exploited by military brigands, in the West it tends to be exploited by labor leaders. But be that as it may, it persists. Such a man as Mr. H. G. Wells is neither a military brigand nor a labor leader, but he sees in his utopias that another experiment has to be tried before their day will dawn. There is, indeed, scarcely a modern prophet who has not said the same thing, beginning with William Morris in his *News from Nowhere*. But the world is still

inclined to persist in the old experiment, and even to glory in it.

As an amusing illustration, a recent American novel may be quoted which sends a plutocratic business man from the Middle West on a visit to North Africa. He is made to be a figure of derision to personified Art and Literature in the beginning, but on his arrival in Algeria he is seen to be, if "a barbarian," at least a "splendid" one. But the power of his wealth is irresistible, and, what is much more significant, it is his successful handling of practical affairs that has procured him his wealth. This shows itself, and is lauded to the skies. In a semi-comic but metaphorically significant incident, his career in the book is closed as he drives off in modern dress, but in a gorgeous motor car, escorted by barbaric cavalry, to call on the Bey of Tunis. Then he is hailed as "the noblest Roman of them all." America's great wealth and successful handling of wealth are at once her new experiment and her great success.

But we do not feel, as Pilate felt of the Roman Empire, that this new Rome, either, is necessarily successful or as sure as the everlasting hills. It would be discourteous and invidious to say

much, but there is that about the boosting of Big Business, about the righteousness of Rotary Clubs, and about the feeding to the hungry multitude of cinema shows and popular magazines, at which we tremble. We have a right to feel that here is a curious parallel with the Roman world of Christ's day. We are no more happy as to the future of the cities of America than he was as to the future of the Roman city of Capernaum or the Jewish city of Jerusalem.

It is, then, because of the practical failure of the world's experiments that the hope revives again of trying the experiment of Christ. At least, why should we not give ear to him? It is our own belief that, willy-nilly, the world will have to do so before the end. For we do not think its tragic story draws near completion, as many Christians still happily think in our time. It must indeed be happiness to be able to feel that the splendor of midday may soon be dimmed by the glory of the return of the traditional Christ, or the silence of midnight riven by the trumpet call of an archangel. But these seem to us childish beliefs which belong to the world's infancy, and which, if Jesus shared, he shared because he was in many ways a child of his day.

It seems truer that the world's only teacher is experience. Yet, on the other hand, it is hard to believe that we shall never grow up enough to move into another class. It would be a counsel of despair to say that we should sit down with folded hands while our clever politicians run into another conflagration in which bombing airplanes and every sort of mechanical horror tear us limb from limb, and poison gas asphyxiates those we love, and whose authors themselves perish at the last in the ruins of our best and fairest. It would equally be a counsel of despair to tell us that we must wait with folded hands while the carnage which has depopulated Petrograd, and the horrors which, temporarily at least, made a hell of Moscow, are reënacted in London, Paris, and New York. Are we to wait until the capitalists of London are put up against walls and shot, and the villages of Kent and Surrey are wiped off the map by disease and starvation, before we try his great experiment? Have a new Kaiser and a new Lenin to be the schoolmasters to bring us to Christ?

One may be forgiven moods of despair and feelings of impotency as one looks out at the spectacle of the world. But there are, in point

of fact, rays of hope. In the first place, it is a curious age in which we live — quite unlike any other age of which we have historic record. Even in his moments of exaltation the historical Christ can never have expected to persuade the world of his day to try his experiment. It took almost a lifetime for events in Jerusalem to penetrate the consciousness of the crowd in Rome, let alone the cities of Gaul. But in our day the exploit of a Colonel Lindbergh can be known to the entire civilized world and set it aflame in much less time even than he took to fly from New York to Paris. Or, more tragically, the execution of a Sacco and a Vanzetti in the quiet death chamber of a Boston jail can reverberate throughout the world as no crucifixion of a Jesus on Calvary could have done. Even the Reformation came slowly, but this reformation might break out on both sides of the Atlantic in a week.

Then there is the satisfaction that the Great Galilean never thought that it would come from above, but from beneath. It is probable that his great temptation was first to appeal to the multitude, even if after that to the religious leaders, or to become friendly to the representa-

tive of Cæsar, and thus inaugurate the experiment. If so, he knew it to be of the Devil, and he resisted it. Deep in his heart's core, something which he poetically and beautifully called "the Will of his Father," and which we may think to have been the voice of his genius, told him otherwise. All that he had to do, or could do, was to live like a sane man in a world of lunatics, an unprejudiced man in a world of prejudices. That indeed provoked opposition enough, God knows! It made him sit down to eat and drink with publicans and harlots; it forced him into opposition to the men his world accounted wise and righteous; and it provoked the powers in high places at his time to condemn him to the cross.

The men and women who try his experiment to-day are likely to be socially ostracized, reviled by the orthodox, scorned by the learned, and, if they attract any attention, suppressed by governments. His experiment seems scarcely compatible even with such noble-sounding things as the glory of the British Empire, the dictatorship of a Mussolini, or the political philanthropy and moral righteousness of God's Own Country. But there is nothing to prevent humble individ-

uals from commencing to experiment. There is not a reader of this little book who could not commence right away if he wished to do so. And a press campaign is a new potentiality in our time.

The historical Jesus seems himself to have drawn a glorious picture of the turmoil that would follow the success of his experiment. Shall we dare translate it into the phraseology of our time? Citizens would be so unpatriotic as at least to refuse to fight in any cause whatever, save possibly as policemen of the Brotherhood of Nations. A thousand legal unions would be disrupted by a husband and a wife refusing to live in hypocrisy and keep an armed peace while love grew cold and maybe perished without their doors. Policies like Prohibition would come to an immediate end, and, marvel of marvels, the churches would not be able to find room for the would-be worshipers within their doors.

Why speak of lesser things? Science would have at its disposal untold millions with which to grapple with cancer and consumption and the other ills of our race. Color questions would automatically be solved for lack of fuel to feed

the flame that keeps them alive. Honest craftsmanship would replace machine-made articles. The food production of the earth would, for the first time in history, be at our disposal in such a manner that we should have leisure to consider the lilies of the field and to behold the fowls of the air. The workers of the world would indeed have no need to take anxious thought for the morrow. And, last but not least for some of us, —

> 'T would ring the bells of Heaven
> The wildest peal for years
> If Parson lost his senses
> And people came to theirs,
> And he and they together
> Knelt down with angry prayers
> For tamed and shabby tigers
> And dancing dogs and bears,
> And wretched, blind pit ponies,
> And little hunted hares.

That might please the Great Galilean, if he knew, as much as anything.

VII

THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST

Should the experiment of Jesus ever be tried, one would naturally look to see its first individual experimenters drawn from the ministry, and the first definite movement take form from its ranks. For the ministers of Christ are pledged to him as laymen are not, and, although the chief thing to be said of the organized ministry of the traditional churches is that it is an organized mistake, there is still more than a little of heroism and devotion to be found in it. To those of us who believe in the historical Jesus it does indeed furnish a pitiable spectacle. It is commissioned to preach a gospel which is not his, and to administer sacraments which he did not institute. We Protestants have sometimes laughed to ourselves to think what would be the astonishment of the historical Jesus if he were to be present at High Mass at St. Peter's, Rome. But if he could make one of the crowd about a

Salvation Army captain he would not be any the less astonished. He would even be horrified on learning that the "fountain filled with blood" flowed from none other than his own veins.

But in our generation the organized ministry has fallen into disrepute on other grounds. It seems to ordinary men that the spectacle of its endeavor to fill the churches by the aid of extravagant preaching, and even of popular entertainments, is not only pathetic, but belittling. And ministers are, somehow, such a curious cross between fanatical men and hysterical women. They cut on the whole a sorry figure. We should even have less contempt for them if they did the job they were supposed to do in a straightforward and manly way, and it is perhaps true that Catholic priests, and, at the other end of the scale, Salvation Army captains, do keep more of our respect as this is the more true of them. A priest does not as a rule pretend to be a layman, and the Salvation Army captain is found more often in the slums than in the drawing-room.

Nevertheless, this contempt exists, and is a little undeserved. The muddled theology of the orthodox churches presents the ministry with an

impossible job. It is commissioned to preach nonsense and to represent a Church which does not know its own mind. The Church, indeed, has rarely known its own mind, for it has never been able to make it up — as indeed it hardly could do in the face of the legacy of muddled thinking which it inherited from Saint Paul. In our day it is less happy than ever it has been. Its ministers are increasingly aware that they plough the sand, and perhaps increasingly dubious of the very machine in their hand. Yet they are not wholly ignoble. We at least who had any part in the Great War take off our hats in reverence before the memory of the Catholic priests of France, and even willingly admit our gratitude to many a clerical worker in the Y. M. C. A. They may have given us but a cup of hot cocoa in the early-morning cold at a wayside station, but they shall in no wise lose their reward. And it is a tragedy that one traitor minister can bring more shame upon the ministry than a score of heroic servants of the same Master. The scandal of one Henry Ward Beecher, "the most eloquent preacher since Saint Paul," does more harm than the heroism of a dozen Father Damiens does good. Yet the

ministry has its Father Damiens, and it is to them that we look.

But the ministers of the historical Jesus would not think of themselves as the ministers of the traditional Jesus think. They are not to be priests about the altar of a divine victim, or even in the main preachers of a theology. While it must be admitted that Jesus had a great deal to say about his Heavenly Father, and that that talk about a Heavenly Father constitutes a theology, we have seen that these sayings of Jesus are not necessarily to be understood in the traditional way. They also constitute, in any case, the least practical part of his own ministry. The Heavenly Father is the deep and hidden kernel of his experiment. He did not expect all men immediately to hear his voice as he heard it, or all men to know his will as he knew it. That would have been to expect too much of them. A genius commonly does expect too much of ordinary men in his own line, but Jesus had something for the ordinary man which was much simpler than this. Interestingly, he did not say, "Blessed are the children of God, for they shall be called the peacemakers," or, "Blessed are they that see God, for they shall be pure in

heart." He reversed that order. It was the man who made his practical experiment that should arrive at his mystical knowledge, and herein the traditional ministry has gone most grievously astray.

The traditional ministry has preached that results follow belief, not that belief is itself a result. A man, it has taught, has first of all to accept the doctrine of the Heavenly Father and of his only begotten Son, whereas the historical Jesus had it that the acceptance of his practical rule of life would result in a man's coming into knowledge of his Heavenly Father. Jesus said of himself: *I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness . . . If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works.* And of his disciples: *He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.* "Accept my practical rule of life, and ye shall come into my spiritual knowledge."

To this end Jesus forever insists that he himself is the servant of men, and he went about serving them. The gospel that he preached was the gospel of service, and not so much the gospel of the service of God as the gospel of the

service of men, which would, he maintained, result in the knowledge of God. Not for nothing have we the traditional story that in the upper chamber before his arrest he took a towel and girded himself and washed his disciples' feet. This is a picture which agrees with our estimate of him far more than that other one of a divine being standing at the supper table and instituting a mystical feast on his body and blood. Yet it is the latter picture upon which the attention of his ministers has been riveted. They would stand where he stood far more often than kneel where he knelt. And if this seems more immediately true of bishops and archbishops than of humble Protestant ministers, the popular Protestant preachers of London and New York tend to become increasingly Episcopal.

Christians, indeed, generally have forgotten one of the most original and arresting characteristics of the historical Jesus. He would not be made a judge and a divider even over his own followers, despite the Old Testament — even over his own people Israel. It is another illustration of the deep conflict within his own soul which is the key to his life. His spiritual genius

knew that it had no place upon the throne of David. Even if, as the child of his age, he was bound to admit that the Messiah would occupy that throne, and that therefore, if he was the Messiah, it would be his, the genius of his spirit told him that that had nothing to do with his experiment in spiritual life. It is unequivocally that he says to his disciples: *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned.* There was no one so far without a beam in his own eye that he could see clearly the mote in his brother's eye. And to his own preaching he resolutely himself adhered. This is characteristic of all the stories that have come down to us of him, and is magnificently illustrated in the fable of the woman taken in adultery, whom even he would not condemn, though if ever he could scarcely avoid condemnation it was then. She had been taken *in the very act.*

But it cannot be denied that our ministers are a kind of black-coated policemen and a class of ecclesiastical magistrates. They would, of course, deny it, even as the mediæval Church threw up its hands in horror at the idea that it ever sent a heretic to the stake. It did not; blood could not stain the hands of the priesthood.

The mediæval Church did its best to convert an erring soul, and only in despair handed him over to the State, sadly shaking its head and saying, "This is a child of the Devil, with whom I can do nothing, and I reluctantly pass him to you." The obedient State asked what should be done with the son of the Devil. The disconsolate Church had to admit that, as God had decreed fire as his punishment in the next life, an earthly judge could scarcely be more merciful in this.

We smile nowadays, superiorly, at the fiction, but the Protestant Church still shuffles along in the same shoes. Protestant ministers in the United States do not enter men's houses and search for whiskey, and they do not hale men off to prison if perchance they know them guilty, but they condemn their drinking and direct the State what it is to do with hardened sinners if it finds them drunk. The ministers of Jesus in England do not arrest those guilty persons who put away their wives, but they judge them beforehand and tell the State what it is to do with them in their sin. They do not walk down Piccadilly and arrest its prostitutes, but they urge that the police should do so. From their pulpits they judge and condemn as Catholic

priests did from their altars. It even seems to the world at large that that is what they are there for.

But it would not have seemed so to the historical Jesus. This was not his rôle, and it was not to be the rôle of his followers. His every disciple had a higher office and a far more difficult work to do. Even he could hardly do such a thing as this, lest he break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax. If he ever said that he had to call sinners to repentance, he meant that he had to do so by awakening in them another outlook on life, by bringing before them the reality of the spiritual as opposed to the seeming reality of the practical, by getting them to choose for themselves what he maintained would be the ultimately "blessed" way. And he could do this best, not by preaching, but by living. Well he knew that the proclamation of the Law had only kept men afar off, but that the living of his life would draw them near. His life was one of service at all risks and at all costs. And his every disciple was called to the same risk at the same cost.

So plainly did he say these things and act thus that even in its glory the traditional Church

could not wholly blind its eyes to them. The Protestant Church, too, has said these things; it would be more blessed if it did them. But it has too often left the doing to Quakers and Communists. Its clergy are not commonly known throughout the world as the genuine friends of publicans and harlots; and if the down-and-outs turn to its ministers, it is because they hold an official position as the administrators of charity, rather than because they love. They are not poor and despised and humble, though they may not be rich and overwell thought of and proud. If the clergy are not well paid, it is ultimately because they are not thought to be worth more, not because they refuse riches. And they resent it that they are not more thought of. They are proud of their unassailable position as dispensers of God's Word and his Sacraments. The mendicant monks were more like the historical Jesus than they.

Now it would be to lack in common sense not to admit that the rôle of the clergy is a difficult one, and, in a sense, the more difficult as it is the less priestly. However well intentioned, it is admittedly difficult for married men with children to be poor, and for men who are forced into

a pulpit twice a Sunday to be humble. There is no disputing that the historical Jesus gives us little guidance in these practical matters. But it is difficult to be sure that the historical Jesus ever envisaged a clergy set apart to be nothing else than preachers or moral policemen. It is difficult to feel that he would even have thought it essential to spend long hours in the preparation of sermons, or that he would have thought that his gospel would require any worldly wisdom at all. One has to say ad nauseam that he was an experimenter and neither a priest nor a preacher. His preaching was an explanation of his experiment, delivered in all places and at all times whenever the occasion served. It was only because the synagogue pulpit was such an occasion that he entered it. Set discourses in a set place on a set occasion may be a development of his manner, but it looks perilously like a new departure. The world of his day was as accustomed to it as ours is, but even in this he inaugurated a new experiment, and even in this his experiment has not been tried.

Do we, then, expect our ministers to leave their pulpits and to find jobs as ordinary men? Whether or not they should do so is not for us to

say, but it seems that such would be the impulse in the hearts of any ministers who desired to serve the historical Christ. Public worship would still afford them opportunities, especially in times of national crises. Then, indeed, even radio broadcasting would be of use. It is amusing to speculate what would have been the result if, at the beginning of the Great War, this new class of ministers of Christ, accustomed rather to preach by their lives than by their voices, had nevertheless felt that the national peril moved them to forsake in a body their normal jobs and to seek the pulpits in order to proclaim that we should love the Germans and even bless them when they despitefully used us. There might have been a glorious holocaust of the ministry, but there would more likely have followed peace. Then these servants of the historical Christ could have gone back to the carpenter's bench and the picks and shovels which they had temporarily abandoned.

The experiment of Christ was not the reformation of the world from the seats of power in high places; it was the leavening of the whole lump by men living spiritual lives. We can therefore ask whether intricate organizations and

committee work and the preaching of a class set apart to preach are not foreign to the genius of his experiment. Once again, it may not be very practical to call on bishops to abandon their palaces or, even more, to resign from their committees. But would the historical Jesus have cared about that? If it had been argued in his hearing that the practical affairs of religion demanded such things, would he not have said that then there was something the matter with the practical affairs of religion? Is not just this organized religion another of our own experiments which has in point of fact already failed? This organized religion of ours has done vastly little to convert the world to a spiritual outlook on life. It does not convince a new modern nation like the Japanese that it is as useful in this regard as locomotives and automobiles are in the practical affairs of life. It has even curiously repelled, to the astonishment of the Church, the multitudes of India and the East generally, who have even more than we, from other sources, acquired a disposition to accept this spiritual outlook. Yet we build still greater churches, and ever increase the number of our committees. We try to adopt business methods

and to convert more souls by spending more money. Dividing the general expenditure of the Church by the number of converts in New York, an American newspaper has found that it costs in the neighborhood of one hundred and fifteen dollars a year to regenerate one person. Feverishly the Church seems to think that by spending twice this amount it can convert two persons in six months. This is our experiment, and we have a right to think that it has failed. Why not therefore try his, which has never been tried?

It is easy to write such things; it is far harder to do them. It would be out of place to go into detail and outline a scheme, especially for the education and selection of ministers, but the historical Jesus, even in the document "Q," did outline some such plan. We read that he sent disciples two by two, without money or luggage, on a mission which apparently was to instruct the missioners themselves as well as to indicate the scope and functions of his ministry. They were to preach that the Kingdom of Spiritual Things was close to men. They were with their free minds to cast out the devils of ignorance and prejudice, and even to heal the sick

whose bodies had been crippled by their souls' crippled outlook. They were to do these things as freely as these things had been done for them. Where they were welcomed, they could eat and drink and receive hospitality, for the laborer was worthy of his food; but where their message was refused, they were to say only that its refusal would bring its own condemnation. They were never to judge and mete out penalties, but only to say sadly that, despite refusal, the Kingdom of God had come nigh to the refuser. And again he adds a typical saying — that the loss incurred even by the city of Sodom for its obvious and openly condemned sins of impurity would not be as great as the ultimate loss of that city which turned from his spiritual interpretation of life. If almost exactly so our young ministers were trained, and when trained continued to act, how different would be the ministry of the Church!

There is also one thing that can be said with regard to even normal preaching of the Christ. The other day the writer listened to a sermon in which the text of the preacher was the miracle of Christ's walking upon the Lake of Galilee and of his subsequent calming of the tempest. The eloquent minister had himself

been to the scene, and he began by first explaining to us that we had wrong ideas about it. He said that he himself had been surprised to find that the whole of the northern end of the lake was shallow water scarcely a foot deep, and that there were great tracts in it that were merely beds of rushes many miles in extent. Moreover, the surrounding country was below sea level, and it could be easily understood that in heavy rains and under the pressure of a wind blowing in the right direction it might become flooded. He therefore suggested that the apparent miracle was easily understood. Jesus had been left behind by his disciples, and his wading out to them through the shallows had been thought to be walking upon the water. Moreover, driven before the wind into the rushes, the disciples had thought that *straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going.*

Now there was in my mind all the time the memory of a little boy sitting on a stained pine bench among working-class people in a humble mission hall and singing lustily a haunting refrain which ran: —

> Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea,
> Or demons or men, or whatever it be,

No waters can swallow the ship where lies
The Master of ocean, and earth, and skies;
They all shall sweetly obey Thy will,
Peace, be still! Peace, be still!

The little boy had thought it strict history, beautiful poetry, and wonderful music. Doubtless none of the three were true, but nevertheless the sermon and the song of the mission hall had helped to give him a sense of spiritual things which lasted his life. No profound story, however true, of a paddling Jesus and of a collection of panic-stricken fishermen who did not know the difference between marshy ground and solid earth could have had any such effect. By the mercy of Providence, the Evangelists did not attempt it in their time. The ancient world had a sense of humor, and if that had been the saga of Jesus it would have been so ridiculed that we should never have heard of it. Yet it is thus that the ministry of our own day preaches to us.

If the ministry should live the life of the historical Jesus, it might preach to us, without any danger of misunderstanding, the story of the traditional Jesus. We cannot have too much of the living example of the one or of the beauty and poetry of the other. The ministry should con-

tent itself with them, but its sense of practical affairs has cheated us of the one, and its special education has deprived us of the other. If the historical Jesus said that we should become as little children to enter into his Kingdom of the Spirit, he did not therein make the least penetrating of his remarks. We are but little children weak, however strong we may sometimes think ourselves. Little children learn from a father's example far more than they learn from his precepts, however moral. Little children like to look at pictures and listen to fairy stories, and both teach them a wisdom that is not found in the world's wise books. The little child never questions the fairy story, but as he grows up he loves it in a different way. It has given him something which makes him turn to the doings of his father with a growing understanding. And such a child, when he is a man, will recall with pleasure his father's precepts.

VIII

THE WORSHIP OF CHRIST

It can hardly be denied that what our forefathers called the habit of public worship is dying out among us, and, while the great majority do not seem to care, there is no more deplorable tendency in all our national life. It will be many centuries yet before we human beings can afford to do without the stimulus and regenerative influence of worship. Worship stands for a quiet hour or two every now and then; and, God knows, our generation needs quiet. Worship stands for the contemplation of a mystery; and while it has always been good for men to contemplate the mysterious, there never was an age in which it was more needed. Worship stands for reflection in the presence of beauty; and while men on Sunday swarm like ants to conventional beauty spots, they are in too great a hurry to stand and look on beauty.

What is life, if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?

Sensational newsmongering is causing us to grow ever more blasé, ever less introspective, ever more ready to hurry to the next thing. Scientific miracles, commercially popularized, are in danger positively of destroying our faculties for wonder. The exploitation of amusements for money is blunting our sense of enjoyment. We are becoming as unmanageable as spoiled children, and as objectionable as children who ape their elders before they are grown up.

Now the course of this decline in the habit of public worship, historically, is an interesting subject. There was an age in which Western men habitually attended Mass and stood awed before the altar, and our Protestant reformers thought that they would only increase the attendance at public worship if they made in the Mass such obviously utilitarian changes as the substitution of English for Latin and of common prayer for a priestly mutter. Matins displaced the Mass in English churches, and the change ought to have been for the good. But the attendance at matins was very soon not in the least what had been the attendance at Mass.

So the early Nonconformists came along with their remedy. The surplice and other "ornaments of the minister" must go; set formal prayers must be abolished; all ceremonies that smacked of superstition must be relegated to the limbo to which the ceremonies of the Mass had already been consigned. These changes, too, sounded plausible enough, but when their novelty had passed away it was not found that attendance in the chapels seriously rivaled the attendance in the churches. Church and chapel between them now divided the worship of the nation, but the attendance at church and chapel taken together, despite their new reasonableness, did not equal the attendance at Mass in the ages of faith.

A new purge has been attempted in our own day. The fathers of Unitarianism sincerely thought that men and women would be won back to public worship if there were removed from it the stumblingblock of a divine Jesus. Ethical churches galore have followed in their train, so that a modern man can, if he will, attend public worship which has been graded down to suit him to the last degree. He need not listen to stories of miracles; he need not be

offended by the old savage ideas of a bloody sacrifice; he is not required to believe in anything; he is only asked to subscribe to the maxim, "Do good, and thou shalt live." But the ethical churches are not crowded to the doors. It is indeed curiously the reverse. No serious traveler can fail to notice that in almost any big town, in either England or the United States, old Catholicism has the biggest congregation, the older Protestantism has the next, and the sweetly reasonable ethical churches have the least.

Not that all these attendances combined make any appreciable proportion of our population. Christians do not notice the fact only because our population is so big. Thus it was recently computed that the attendance at every place of worship in London on an ordinary Sunday amounted to little more than six per cent of the population. But six per cent of the population of London totals to close on half a million, which would give a thousand churches respectable congregations. A thousand ministers in a thousand pulpits might well think that there was still a fairly strong habit among us of public worship. But in point of fact the great majority of us think

of church as the last place to which to go on a Sunday morning. We used to justify ourselves by saying that we could worship better by taking country walks in the woods and lanes and in gazing upon beauty there, but it is dubious now whether many of us even trouble to make such excuse. We say instead that for a city man a round of golf is more invigorating than a sermon, and that the fresh air in an automobile is better for the children than the stuffy air of a church. At any rate, we do not go.

Even if we did go, we should find the real essentials of worship lacking in half our churches. Half of them consider the sermon the important thing; but listening to a sermon, however noble, is not worship. Half of them try to be "brief, brotherly, and breezy"; but while worship may be brief, and can be brotherly, it is doubtful if it is ever breezy.

It may fairly be said of England that in the whole year the nation spends but two minutes in genuine worship. Those are the two minutes' silence at eleven o'clock on the eleventh of November. A striking incident may illustrate this. On the eleventh of November last year, traveling northward to Scotland, a clergyman noticed on

St. Pancras Station a little group of half a dozen commercial travelers, all slightly intoxicated and all extremely hearty, not to say, in his estimation, vulgar. They crowded into his compartment, so that he hastily left it and sought another, where, in the company of one obviously studious Scotchman, he hoped to travel in peace. Intent upon their books, neither of the two noticed the time, but by chance the clergyman left his compartment to walk up the corridor of the train at just about eleven. He was suddenly reminded that it was Armistice Day and the time for silence by the sight of those six boisterous, vulgar business men standing with bowed heads in their compartment, while upon their seats awaited them the scattered cards of an interrupted game of poker.

No man can stand in Whitehall on one of these occasions without feeling that he is watching a genuine act of worship. Yet that act of worship scarcely bears analysis. It may well be asked, What do the vast majority do during those two minutes? They hardly pray; they have indeed been taught that it is a superstition to pray for the dead. A few may think of God, but in all probability the great majority do not believe

in him, or, if they believe in him, do not allow that belief intelligently to direct their actions. They merely stand silent before a memory, silent in the presence of a mystery, silent in the consciousness of a beautiful thing. They would not wish the ritual of a few resplendent uniforms, of the Sovereign's escort of Life Guards, of the white-robed choir, and of the ceremonial laying of the wreaths, deleted from it. All these are part of the act of national worship; they enhance it. There are few of us, even the most intellectually republican, who are not glad that the heads of the nation are not merely a few frock-coated and black-hatted gentlemen, and that we have not yet abolished, as pure reason would have us do, some sort of established church.

The restoration of this habit of public worship is, however, a serious problem. It is one that we ourselves most truly feel. The modern mind is convinced that petitionary prayer is a savage survival of the days of man's scientific ignorance, and, even more, that the traditional God is something of a superstition too. While there are a great many men who still feel, intellectually, that they must account for the origin of things, as well as for the sustaining of them, by admit-

ting the existence of some Power whom they are bound to designate in some way as God, nevertheless the great majority feel the essential truth of that incident which is related by a modern novelist of his fictitious hero. Jurgen came at last to the throne of God, and saw upon it a white-bearded, venerable figure. But the sight only made him smile. "At what are you smiling?" demanded God angrily. "Why," replied Jurgen, breaking into a chuckle, "you are only my old grandmother's God after all." And then he rubbed his eyes in astonishment, for in that moment he saw that the throne of God was empty, and, being a little weary, he went up to it and sat down upon it.

To take, practically, the morning worship offered to the majority of Englishmen, there is first a confession which is curiously unreal. While the worshipers are ready in a half-hearted way to admit that they are not what they ought to be, they have for long been taught that the really deadly sins are adultery and theft and murder, of which they are not guilty — if they were guilty of them they would not be there. Moreover, they have a kind of feeling that it is rather good of them to be there. If God has

any views at all upon the matter, he ought to be pleased rather than offended. And after this they are asked to chant, rapidly, ancient psalms in which only disconnected and platitudinous phrases rise intelligibly from screeds of nonsense. They are asked to listen to readings, either of curiously unmoral and really revolting history, or of unintelligible prophets, or of miraculous Gospel stories in which the congregation does not think that even the minister honestly believes, or of theological discourses by Saint Paul of which the modern man can make neither head nor tail. There concludes a series of prayers or a litany of the value of which we moderns are more than doubtful, or to which the Deity seems singularly deaf. We have, for example, asked him times without number to give peace in our time, but we are well aware that any measure of peace we may have enjoyed is due to the British Navy or the good luck of our statesmen. Mighty little it is, at that.

The whole thing is interspersed with hymns which we sing because they are traditional, trying not to pay too close attention to their meaning, or, a few of us, to reflect upon their rhyme. Even an archbishop is credited with saying that

there are only eight hymns in the hymn book which he can bring himself to sing. And then follows the sermon, which it is a great deal easier to abuse than to preach, suffering, as it does, from one serious circumstance: the Church which the unfortunate preacher represents is so bewildered and divided as to what it stands for, that he, nine times out of ten, is bewildered also, and tradition at least urges him to steer clear of controversial subjects, not to be too explicit on the subject of sex, and to confine himself to the common morality which, after all, we know as well as he. Nor must we forget the offertory, which the little children think the most interesting and important part of the whole proceeding, and in which they are not so far wrong, either.

There is hardly anyone who does not admit that this is the kind of muddle into which we have gotten ourselves, and there are hardly two persons who agree as to the remedy. The pathetic effort of the Church of England to reform its Prayer Book hardly needs comment, unless it is this — that the reforms over which the pious make such fuss provoke no more than an amused smile from the average man to-day. He has

long since ceased even to be interested in the once universally heart-rending controversies of which they are still the symbol. Once again it is worth while to illustrate by an anecdote. For a century or more the scrupulous Church has been ashamed at the words of the first exhortation in the service for the solemnization of matrimony. Its ministers have blushed at having to remind innocent virgin brides of "men's carnal lusts and appetites," and have scrupled "to inform their congregations that marriage was ordained for the procreation of children" and "for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication." Our churches have largely ceased to echo with such disgraceful words, and after a couple of centuries or so the Church has just made up its mind to expunge them from the Prayer Book. But while the Church was making up its mind the world had rolled over once or twice. On the day that the Church made the change, the radio service of the world broadcast the abominable sentences, and those same innocent virgins, on a liner in mid-Atlantic, laughed over them in public at the breakfast table!

A more serious criticism thinks that the very tragedies of life, from which we cannot escape

however modern we be, still call forth the ancient desire of men for a religion which centres in a divine victim and a sacrifice. Human beings, they say, in the hour of death and in the day of judgment, want to believe in a Father-God. Modern life may have postponed the terror of these things, but it exists deep down in us, and a religion which does not satisfy this want can never expect worshipers.

All this may be true, but, if so, it is only so much the worse for religion. There may be dark places in Nature and dark hours in life, but there is not a divine victim, and the existence of a Heavenly Father is increasingly dubious. The day is past when a fiction can satisfy us or when we can rest upon a guess. We have to face the fact that however comforting is "the old, old story" of traditional Christianity, it is nothing but a story. The eloquence of popular evangelists, or the emotionalism latent in us all, may give it life for an hour, but it does not last. We cannot with such things, however much we should like to do so, permanently revive or make universal the habit of public worship.

First and foremost, the historical Jesus is traditionally reported to have said, *God is a Spirit:*

and they that worship him must worship him in spirit. It is time for us to come back rigidly to those words. It may be that this Spirit was the Creator of heaven and earth and is the God of our grandmothers, but, if so, we cannot impute to him all that the Jews of the Old Testament, or even the Fathers of the Christian Church, imputed. We have rigidly to confine ourselves to what we know. All those who embark on the experiment of the historical Christ admit the existence of a spiritual side of things upon which we can resolutely take our stand. Inspiration is not confined to theology. It may confidently be said that no man has ever yet done a great thing who did not feel that in doing it he was calling in some mysterious way upon a reservoir, in a sense, outside of himself. An author is the first to confess that it is almost despite himself that he writes his book. The artist backs him up by declaring that some kind of inspiration guides his brush. The statesman, the general, or the admiral, the leader of men of any sort, admits after the battle that the seemingly desperate order which he gave was an inspiration. No two men and women exist who have been in love and have not felt that in that moment

there was a bond between them which was in its nature spiritual and not merely physical, and this, the commonest of all human experiences, is daily confirmed by our scientific knowledge.

Men and women may be likened to a row of glass jars. They may touch each other on a shelf, but they stand isolated. It is not through the glass that the contents of one can reach the other. No one of us has ever heard, or seen, or touched directly another of us. We hear over a sort of telephone wire. We see the external manifestation, and even that only in reflecting glasses. We have to be made conscious of contact by an intricate nervous system which takes measurable time to operate. But the contents of the jars may intermingle, as it were, up through their open tops, through that other element of the air which surrounds them. In the times of our greatest emotion we are aware that we can establish contact through something supersensual — that is to say, spiritual. We transcend mere mechanical machines as we keep the openings of the jars unclosed and as we reach up into this spiritual atmosphere.

All this is of the spirit, and it may be that this spirit is God. At any rate, it is of the first and

most vital moment that we should not shut ourselves up and hermetically seal ourselves from it. This was the gospel of the historical Jesus, the development of which was the experiment that has never been tried. It, or maybe he, is the mystery before which we moderns stand as awestruck as ever men stood before their idea of Jehovah, but the churches have to see to it that they do not prevent us from doing so by any attempted identification of this spirit with past notions of God. This spirit may be the life which seems to underlie all things, which seems to have moved purposefully in evolution, which may be the very movement in electrons; but the utmost caution is necessary in these reflections. The modern mind cannot forget that it has indubitably discovered that life is also heartless and ruthless; it cannot forget that the evolution which has made us what we are has discarded as mercilessly from its hand other forms of life, that there does not seem to be any personal attribute in radioactivity. We cannot sing, as our forefathers sang, "He made the mighty ocean"; and we simply do not believe that he ordained "the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate." The very word "Father,"

which Jesus used with such freedom, we shrink from. If we use it at all, as in the poem which precedes this little book, it is only for his sake, and when we are not asked to assent to reputed activities of that Father which seem to us to belong to the imaginations of men's ignorance.

But on the other hand, we have in Christ all the God we know, and all we need to know. In saying this we do not, on the one hand, identify him with the Creator of heaven and earth, or, on the other, make two Gods, one of him and one of this Creator, as Mr. H. G. Wells seems so curiously to have done. It is just that his spiritual genius raises him so far above us in our spiritual life that he becomes naturally our leader, our hero, our model. It is a providence that he is so far historically unknown that he can call forth from us something of the same emotion that is called forth by the Unknown Soldier. He stands for the highest development of man, and, try as we will, we cannot see any other intelligent mind than man's in the universe. To the other forces that we dimly sense we cannot attribute personality, but to Christ we can and must. He is our God. We are not ashamed of him. And the less so as he is a man.

The stories told of the traditional Christ are fairy stories, but the beauty of the traditional Christ is no fairy story. His inspiration is no legend, nor his power to inspire us a fiction. Moreover, his complete conviction that life in its very nature is alive makes him alive forevermore. He never argued about death any more than we have any need whatever to argue, for, while all beyond is a mystery into which it seems hardly possible that we can penetrate, the fact remains that every alive man is innately conscious that death is not in the same order of things as life. His life does not grow older as he lives. His body grows older, and his failing bodily strength may impede the activities of his life, but, if anything, his essential life grows stronger as the years pass. Death belongs to the order of material things of which he has been conscious all his days, and of which he has found out one secret — that material things may change, but they cannot be annihilated. Thus, to him as to Christ, death was never and is never an annihilation. A change it may be, but he is already accustomed to the fact that every change in the progression of universal life is a change for the better. As an individual he must at least

participate at death in a change for the better. Thus we need not be spiritualists, or what we technically know as mystics, to feel that we have in Christ a living God. It thus becomes possible in moments of emotion, or at least when using the language of emotionalism, which none of us wholly refuse to do at other times, to speak to Jesus and to ask of him his inspiration and his aid. In this sense consider slowly such words as these: —

Jesus, Lover of my soul,
  Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
  While the tempest still is high:
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
  Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
  O receive my soul at last.

We can be the most modern of modernists and yet sing these words. It is indeed to cheat us of our heritage to take them from us.

To be personal for a moment, the writer had a curious experience the other day. He was asked to minister, and did so very gladly, in a church that had wholly purged itself of the divine-victim idea and of all other taints of traditionalism. But nevertheless public worship was con-

ducted in a delightful and refreshing manner. The adjuncts of music, decorative art, and even of ritual, were not lacking — adjuncts which men desire and will have though it be only in their Friendly Societies. But the Beatitudes of Jesus replaced the Ten Commandments. No traditional God was addressed in prayer, nor asked to grant those special favors which we know he does not grant; only before the Spirit of Life did we stand in reverent worship. But there was one extraordinary lack in the proceedings. A new and beautiful hymn book had been compiled from which Jesus, our human God, was excluded. The result was an immeasurable loss. The personal element in worship was lacking. That hero worship innate in us all was absent. There was wisdom, but it was cold; there was a community of spirit, but it lacked enthusiasm. We were, if ever men were, as sheep without a shepherd, as soldiers without a leader. Perhaps it is for that reason that the slums of the great city in which that church stands remain unswept away.

The awed silence of Quaker meetings before a mystery can never be all that there is of worship. Equally, the notes of an organ or the singing

of admittedly emotional hymns can never be all that there is of worship. The beauty of a great Cathedral, the gestures of a reverent ritual, even the use of traditionally symbolic things such as lights and incense, can never be all that there is of worship. Even allegiance to a great personality can never be all that there is of worship. All these things must combine in worship. And in the day that they are so combined there is not likely to be a lack of worshipers.

The reformation of our public worship upon such lines as these is a task from which any man might shrink, but equally it happens to be a task which any truly spiritually-minded man might attempt. The historical Jesus, one feels, would be neither astonished nor horrified at such worship. There is indeed no reason why he should not feel himself at home there. It is even possible — one says it reverently — that the living spirit of Jesus might make itself at home there.

And the great public service which is traditionally associated with Jesus has woven itself into our imagination and become also a part of our inheritance. Bread and wine can never be for us, either in fact or in symbol, the body and blood of a divine victim, still less the body and

blood of a man who suffered two thousand years ago from the greatest blunder ever committed by human justice. But bread and wine can be and are representative of the whole mystery of material things, and symbols of that life which is so curiously intertwined, in our experience, with them. There is for us no point whatever in sacrificing bread and wine to anyone, or even, if it could be, in the sacrifice to any deity of body and blood. But the centuries have made broken bread and outpoured wine the symbols of sacrifice; and if the men in Flanders sacrificed themselves for England, much more did the Great Galilean sacrifice himself for the experiment which he believed, and which we may come to believe, is the hope of the world. If the spirits of those who have passed have any consciousness of us, and are at any time, in any sense, present with us, on what more likely occasion could they be present than at our memorial of all self-sacrifice, beginning with that of Jesus, that there has ever been? We might at such a service extol that self-sacrifice with all of music and of beauty that we know, and we might pledge ourselves to participate in it by partaking of the symbols in which also we could

perceive the very mystery of life. Holy Communion would still be a sacrament of the spiritual life of men. And still the most modern of moderns could sing that lovely poem: —

I hunger and I thirst;
Jesus, my Manna be:
Ye living waters, burst
Out of the Rock for me.

Thou bruised and broken Bread,
My life-long wants supply;
As living souls are fed,
O feed me, or I die!

Thou true life-giving Vine,
Let me Thy sweetness prove;
Renew my life with Thine,
Refresh my soul with love.

Rough paths my feet have trod,
Since first their course began;
Feed me, Thou Bread of God;
Help me, Thou Son of Man.

For still the desert lies
My thirsting soul before;
O living waters, rise
Within me evermore!

APPENDIX

A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EARTHLY LIFE OF JESUS

For the sake of clarity, although at the risk of a little reiteration, there is here attempted what has been already stigmatized as impossible. But this short biographical sketch will confine itself to what may fairly definitely be presumed to be historical facts, and an interpretation of them which can, however, only be regarded as a guess, however plausible.

I. The Birth

In the Roman province of Galilee, at the time of the transition of the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire, — that is, at the beginning of the period of Roman world-supremacy, — the child Jesus was born of parents in the normal human way. He was later commonly supposed to have been born in Nazareth, of a father, Joseph, who is said to have been of royal lineage, and of a mother, Mary, of whom we know noth-

ing at all. The assumption of his virgin birth, and the assumption of the immaculate conception of his mother, were both of later origin, and were derived from the current Gentile parallels concerning the birth of mythical divine personages. His mother, Mary, may have been something of a mystic, and the doctrine that she was free from original sin seems less stupendous to us than to our forefathers, seeing that we may credibly doubt the existence of original sin at all. But it was a free-spoken age, and this family lived in a peasant village. His enemies, who later hurled every conceivable taunt at him, would certainly not have omitted that of illegitimacy if there had existed in their minds any doubts as to his father. Beyond one dubious trace of such a taunt in Saint John, there is no evidence of any such thing, and John may even have said what he did because there was already arising the later doctrine which he was well aware would have given rise to such a taunt if it had been common in the lifetime of Jesus.

Of the child Jesus there is only one certain thing to be said: he was a genius of the first order. He was not a genius in art or literature, but he was a genius in religion. He was what we

moderns might call a genius of the spiritual life. Although it is very difficult to define exactly what a genius is in any order, there is no doubt as to this.

Not only do all the traditional stories which have come down to us of him reveal this genius of his, but it is evident in the sayings which we can regard more satisfactorily as historical. He was more definitely aware of, and concerned in, the spiritual than the temporal aspect of affairs. Man's life, he said, consisted not in the abundance of the things which he possessed. He was, indeed, to take no anxious thought for temporal things at all. If he were poor, humble, and persecuted, he was the more blessed because under these conditions his spiritual life would flourish. He would have eternal riches in a spiritual kingdom that was within him. In and for this spiritual kingdom it was man's happiest lot to live and die. He that lost his earthly life for this should save it for life eternal, and he that saved his earthly life at the expense of the spiritual would lose his spiritual life no less eternally. This was the sum of the gospel that he both taught and consistently practised.

More than this, like all other mystical

geniuses, he was predominantly aware of a mystical relationship within himself to a Power which he regarded as personal, and which he sometimes externalized, and at other times as acutely felt, dwelt within him. Traditionally, he spent long hours, and even whole nights, in what we may call either self-communion or prayer. He called this Power his Father, and sometimes he would say, *I and my Father are one*, or at other times regard his "Father" as a being distinct from himself, who might even impose his will upon him against, in a sense, his own human will or human judgment.

This aspect of the genius of Jesus was very largely an original one. He was not, indeed, the first Jew to attribute fatherly instincts to God, as he was not the first Jew to call himself the Son of Man. But while the story of the feeding of Elijah by ravens may be compared with that saying of Jesus that we should take no anxious thought for food and drink because our Heavenly Father will feed us, it is evident that Elijah did not look upon God exactly as Jesus looked upon his Father. While Ezekiel reported that God commonly called him "Son of Man," it is obvious that he did not feel himself

to be a Son as Jesus felt himself to be. As Jesus conceived it, there was an intimacy and affection between his Father and himself such as no other Jewish spiritual genius had conceived. But there is no evidence that this conception was other than a human conception. It was not a special revelation. It was stronger than, but not of a different order from, the conceptions of others who had preceded and were to follow him. If it was different, the difference consisted in, first, its being more intimate, and, secondly, in the fact that Jesus regarded it as properly universal. He thought of his Father as the Father of all men; he thought of all men as the children of his Father; he would have all men hear and obey his Father's will. There was not one will for him and another for other men.

But Jesus was almost certainly a Jewish boy, and he breathed at any rate a Jewish atmosphere. It is here that we get our first anticipation of the internal spiritual conflict which was to be the deciding factor of his life. As a Jew, it seemed impossible that this spiritual inner Power of which he was so conscious could be other than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but if he was not immediately himself aware that his

conception of this Power differed amazingly from the patriarchal conception of Jehovah, that knowledge was very soon forced on him by others. It would have created more of a conflict if his spiritual genius had not been so strong. Thus it was a universal Old Testament characteristic of Jehovah that he used the forces of Nature in the interests of his chosen people. For example, in more than one definite instance he had rained upon their enemies to aid them, but Jesus was so sure that his Heavenly Father sent rain impartially upon the just and the unjust that he could use that assurance as a reason why we should love our enemies. Jehovah had repeatedly made the towers of Siloam fall on those who particularly deserved his punishment, but Jesus, in the specific instance, repudiates the idea. And where Jehovah was conceived of as having deliberately instituted sabbatical laws and observances which Jesus felt to be contrary to the spirit of his Father, Jesus had no hesitation whatever in brushing them on one side.

How he reconciled himself to such obvious difficulties in the identification of this Father of his with the God of the Jews, we do not know. The difficulty has indeed lost its significance for

us who have been schooled in the acceptation of it for so long, but his contemporaries were well aware of it and not unjustly incensed by it. As a matter of fact, Jesus himself probably attempted no reconciliation. It is characteristic of geniuses not to be overtolerant of other men's difficulties in their assumptions. He was so strongly aware within himself of this Father, and so overwhelmingly bound up in him and his will, that he put aside as of no account all objections. He knew he was right, and there was an end of the matter. That there is not an end of the matter for us has nothing to do with the facts.

Without disrespect to Jesus, we are bound to compare his mystical experience with that of other mystics. A Hindoo mystic will believe that Krishna dwells within him as he in Krishna, but all we can say is that the Krishna of the mystic is not the Krishna of the Indian countryside. A mediæval mystic felt that he dwelt in Christ and Christ in him, but all we can say is that the Christ of the mystic is not the traditional Christ of the mediæval Catholic countryside. So, too, Jesus felt that he dwelt in God and God in him, but all we can say is that this God was not the Jehovah of the Jews of Pales-

tine. But whatever he was, he was more real to Jesus than Jehovah to any Jew.

II. The Baptism

Of this genius for, traditionally, thirty years, we know nothing historically. But as there has never been in the world's history a genius of whom there were not afterward related more or less apocryphal childhood stories and sayings, so it was also in the case of Jesus. We can set aside such a legend as that he made clay pigeons and gave them life, but there is no need to be so drastic with such a story as that of how he astonished the doctors of the Law in the temple. A boy like that must have astonished them. But that he had in the cradle the knowledge of an Einstein, or showed at any time a supernatural wisdom, we can read with a smile. We can only be grateful that so little is traditionally reported. We have wished a score of times that the early poems of many a genius had never been included in their mature work. During these thirty years, however, it was natural that he should grow, first in the realization of his own genius, and secondly in the realization that it differentiated him from other men.

Now, as a Jew, Jesus could not hope to escape from the common anticipation of the Jewish Messiah. We have largely forgotten that this expectation was not chiefly or of necessity the expectation of a divine or a spiritual being as we should use the phrase. Primarily he was coming to restore a temporal kingdom to Israel. But if the Old Testament prophets had worked miracles, it was of course natural to the Jewish mind to suppose that he would do so also. Moreover, the Jewish mind had long since ceased to limit its speculations with death. Enoch had walked with God; neither he nor Elijah had died as common men die, or ended their ministrations with such a death. Many of the phrases traditionally attributed to Jesus are quotations from the apocryphal lives of such men both before and after death. For example, the phrase we think of as so wholly that of Jesus, that with regard to the many mansions which he said were preparing for us in his Father's house, was such a quotation. The boy Jesus was thus soaked with such Messianic expectations, and it would have been extraordinarily unlikely that the man Jesus, believing himself of the royal line, interiorly aware of the spiritual link between himself

and the Power which he thought to be identical with Jehovah, should not have early faced the question as to whether or not he was the Messiah. And this was to be the unanswered question which is the keynote of his life.

Historically, when Jesus is said to have been about thirty years of age, the dramatic figure of John the Baptist set the country in an uproar. Before the Messiah there was to come Elijah, and all Jews tremulously asked themselves the question if this John were not Elijah. He looked like him, and he spoke like him. He was a prophet of fire. He dared the wrath of Herod the king as Elijah had dared the wrath of Ahab. When he came preaching his gospel of repentance in anticipation of one coming after him, whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose, Jews of religion and Jews without religion alike flocked to hear him.

Again, if Jesus had not gone out to hear John, it would have been an extraordinary thing. If he had not stepped into the waters of Jordan to identify himself with the national repentance, it would have been remarkable. We must believe, moreover, that his spiritual genius made him the most exalted and the most expectant

in that crowd. Both characteristics could not have escaped the notice of John the Baptist, and the incident that is reported of Jesus agrees with a thousand others related of mystical geniuses in all ages and in all places. Jesus was swept away by his enthusiasm. He had listened far too long to the voice of his Father within him not to hear him say that day what indeed he had said a thousand times, *This is my beloved Son.* If, in his exaltation, he exteriorized the voice and the vision, we may well believe it.

III. The Temptation

So also we may believe that our earliest document, "Q," reports faithfully of Jesus that immediately after his baptism he went off alone into the wilderness. There he faced afresh the question of his life, which must have seemed to his human intelligence to have been answered in the affirmative that day by the side of Jordan. And if he was convinced at the time that he was the Messiah, the question arising in his human mind would be this: What step ought he to take in order to enter upon his office?

Humanly speaking, there would have been but three possible answers: first, that he should

appeal to the people by means of the signs and wonders which the Messiah could undubitably perform; secondly, that he should go up to the Temple and appeal to the religious leaders there to recognize him officially; or, thirdly, that he should boldly enter the palace of the representative of Cæsar and ask him as man to man bloodlessly to abdicate the office which rightly belonged to the throne of David. And it was exactly in these three particulars that Jesus came to feel that he was tempted of the Devil.

Any record of that great temptation must have come originally from the lips of Jesus himself. It is doubtful whether even he could speak coherently of it; it is absolutely certain that no one to whom he spoke could have understood the rights of it. For the tragedy of the thing was this — that the spiritual genius of Jesus showed itself absolutely opposed to any one of the three reasonable courses of action which the human mind of Jesus suggested. Moreover, it could have given no reason for its opposition. Deep in him he discovered only that he was to do no one of them. Any one lay outside the spiritual course of things to which he knew himself committed. We can understand why; we

can understand that the restoration of the kingdom to Israel was a figment of mistaken imagination, and that the Messiah himself was a superstitious dream. But the genius of Jesus would hardly have been as coherent as that. He would indeed have been superhuman if it had been. These things came to him backed by every authority that he knew, and commended by all that was noble and religious in his country's life. Opposed to them was only this unbreakable and inexplicable kernel of his spiritual conviction. And the horror of horrors lay in this — that, ever since he could remember, he had identified the conviction of his spiritual genius with the "will of his Father," and yet that Father must be the God of Israel.

A man who can read the story without feeling something of this horror must be devoid of all imagination. There is no conflict equal to that which takes place in a good man's soul between two seeming, but conflicting, goods. In the soul of Jesus it must have been a hundred times more intense than any of us can imagine. It was a conflict destined to recur again and again, and he could never speak of it afterward with precision. Using the language of his day, and

inclining to the pictorial bent of his mind, he had it that the Devil had tempted him miraculously to turn stones into bread and prove to himself and the people that there was no question of his Messiahship. It must have been the Devil, for "the will of his Father" said no. Foiled, the Devil had gone on to suggest a dramatic appearance in the Temple, but "the will of his Father" had said no. Lastly, the Devil urged him to make a friend of Cæsar, — and what was that but to fall down before the very Devil himself? — and "the will of his Father" had said no. What, then, did "the will of his Father," or, as we should say, the impulse of his genius, undoubted as it was, tell him to do in the event, which seemed so likely, that he was the Messiah? As with a million lesser men before and since, God was tragically silent. Starving and alone, it was the triumph of his genius that Jesus did not do as lesser men have done and declare that there was no God.

Whether the temptation lasted actually forty days or less, we shall never know, nor shall we ever know whether the precise details seemed to have been as they are written to the mind of Jesus or were only so in the imagination of his

disciples. The analogy of the Old Testament would have furnished either. But it does not matter. We may well believe that never before or since has there been such a conflict within a human soul.

IV. The Ministry

But in the wilderness Jesus had won a greater victory than he probably knew. It would not have been surprising if he had emerged at least weakened by the strain of the conflict; but he emerged the stronger. Either it had left such marks upon him that he literally could not return to the haunts of men undistinguished by it, or else it was in the wilderness that he made up his mind that, while the question of his action as Messiah must remain for a while undetermined, it was at least incumbent upon him to preach the spiritual gospel which was the fundamental impulse of his life. The document "Q" would seem to have briefly stated that after the temptation he began to go about all the cities and villages of Galilee, taking every opportunity to proclaim his gospel of the spiritual kingdom. "Q" almost immediately embarks upon that collection of sayings of his which is its main

bulk, and it significantly prefaces them with the Beatitudes and with that saying that he had not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. In that verse we probably have a reflection of the recent conflict. This was as far as he felt he could go, and it seems to reveal, moreover, that his own mind was not wholly unaware how remarkably like destruction of the Law his gospel of the Kingdom would seem. It gropes for an equivocation, though his gospel is never equivocal. He threw, as it were, a little sop to the human side of himself, but he went on resolutely enough with his message, *Ye have heard . . . but I say unto you . . .*

"Q" also relates that two results followed at once, which indeed we should have expected. It was impossible, in the first place, that so noble a leader should be without immediate and intimate disciples — of both sexes, we may suspect. But the harsh mind of the later Church has suppressed much if not all of the discipleship which ensued among women. It has given us the traditional twelve, and among the traditional twelve the tendency already shows itself to regard Simon Peter as the chief. And already in that little band the note of tragedy obtrudes

itself. No one could have suspected it at the time, least of all Jesus, but one was there who was to be branded for all time as the Betrayer.

In the second place, his miraculous gifts of healing immediately showed themselves. He was not to make stones bread, whether or not he would or could, — upon that much his genius was resolute, — but his genius could not prevent this resolute, normal man, with a will undeterred by superstition or the common absurdities of his day, from going about doing good. Nor could his genius prevent the ignorant minds of the people from seeing in what he did a miraculous element that was not there, or the popular report from magnifying what they saw. There was very soon nothing that Jesus could not do or had not done. Certainly those who believed on him would have thought shame to attribute to him anything less than had been attributed to the Old Testament prophets. But "Q" is remarkably reticent. There is in its whole length but three miracles, or possibly four — the servant of the centurion who was *grievously tormented*, a woman who had *a spirit of infirmity*, and a dumb man *possessed with a devil*. For this was an age in which all human ills, from a

bad thought to a headache, were attributed to devils, and, so far as we can put any trust in "Q" as an historical document, it was precisely the casting out of such devils that Jesus did. We can well believe it. He was exactly the kind of man who would have cast them out. And he was exactly the kind of man who would so impress his own mind upon his disciples that they too might have been able to cast them out. Nor is there anything more that can be affirmed with anything approaching historical certainty of the events of Jesus's ministry.

V. The Growth of Opposition

Of the events traditionally reported, however, it is common chiefly to remark the growing hostility of the Jews. But while the gospel of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus was perfectly certain to stir up a growing hostility, in which we therefore have no difficulty in believing, there may have been another conflict, which, if we are right, is much the more important.

It must be understood by a reader that either can only be inferred from traditional stories which can only be accepted as stories, and upon which not much reliance is to be placed. Even

the very question of their proper sequence cannot now be determined. It would seem that the Evangelists themselves were not sure whether the ministry lasted three years or one. A story may be placed by Matthew in Galilee in the beginning of the ministry, and by Luke in Judæa at its close. Only John gives rhyme or reason for the wanderings of Jesus, and he, of the four, is the least likely to be right. As many attempts have been made to piece the whole coherently together as there are intelligent critics of the story. We may follow a Professor Burkitt in "preferring" Mark, though he switches to Luke when it comes to the events of the Crucifixion — and, indeed, the writer has been tempted to do so. But Professor Somebody Else can make out just as good a case for another author. The truth is, the Evangelists scarcely agree at all, even in the very date and time of the Crucifixion. Millions of pious Christians assemble at midday on Good Friday for the three hours' service, but, if Mark is right, Jesus was crucified between nine and ten o'clock, and would have been dead by midday.

It is therefore into this confused medley that we dip arbitrarily for a story or two which seem

to us to be best explained on the hypothesis of this interior conflict in the mind of Jesus. If he was still doubtful as to what he was to do if he was the Messiah, and if his genius was ever victorious in preventing his acting on that assumption, there are difficult incidents which seem thus explained. It appears not to have been long before the crowd itself was more than willing to see in him the Messiah and to make him king, but his spiritual genius asserted itself, probably not without a struggle, and he went out of the country to escape them. It may have been that he went into the district of Tyre, a Gentile country, among whose inhabitants he might hope to avoid the pressure which the Messianic hopes of his countrymen were exerting upon him.

Or again, at some time or another it seems that the news of his activity reached the ears of Herod, and there was now opportunity for a proclamation in the ears of royalty. But once again Jesus gives up teaching and leaves the country — possibly flies in haste across the Sea of Galilee by boat out of Herod's territory, and possibly on this occasion likewise he was, as it were, not quite sure of himself. There is the

tradition that he definitely asked the disciples what they thought of him — a story which has been ecclesiastically interpreted, but is much more likely an instance of a harassed man appealing to his friends for support. Some of them return answers which help him little, but to Saint Peter's outburst that he is certainly the Messiah he lends a willing ear. He was right, then, in his imagination. He is confirmed in his thoughts of himself, but when his genius tells him that this spiritual gospel of his will go on stirring up opposition until it results in his death, and he confides that conviction to his disciples, then it is immediately and naturally this Peter who rebukes him. How could such a death await the Messiah, he demanded, not illogically. And at that the conflict in the mind of Jesus is once more made acute. But for the moment he has no doubt that if the mission of his spiritual teaching is to be given up for the Messiahship, then it is again a temptation of the Devil. He rounds on Peter with his famous *Get thee behind me, Satan.*

So, too, we may interpret the story of the messengers of John the Baptist, which shows that behind its prison walls that faithful mind

also was beginning to be perplexed. *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* The very question implies that John knew what Jesus was doing, what he was preaching, how he was healing, and of how he was being followed by a band of devoted adherents. Jesus, too, knew that he knew. But he returns no answer. He has indeed no answer to return. His reply to John reads as if he said: "What do you yourself think? Surely I must be the Messiah to be doing and saying all these things, but I have no inspiration openly to declare my Messiahship or to act upon it. That is precisely my own dilemma. I can do no otherwise, but I can do no less. And that is all I can say to you."

Thus, too, may be interpreted the sayings of Jesus, found even in "Q," concerning the Second Coming. It is a composite account, because two sets of his sayings were confused in the minds of his disciples. He was often asked of the coming of his spiritual kingdom, and he said, as his genius prompted him, that it would be *not with observation*, for it would grow slowly, *like to a grain of mustard seed*. But they also asked him of the coming of the Messiah, and he replied, then, in the apocryphal language with which he

was humanly familiar. It was to be *as the lightning;* as things were *in the days of Noah* or *of Lot.* But the two comings were one in the minds of his disciples. He himself may have had difficulty in separating them. At least there again lay the germ of the conflict that is the key to his life.

In this way, all about the person of Jesus the great battle of the temptation was being fought again. His very friends began to look upon him doubtfully, not in the least understanding why he failed to do the thing which was uppermost in their minds, and the most obvious. They too were aware, as he was aware, that the opposition of authority in Church and State was increasingly growing, and that the chief priests were resolved that there must be made an end of him. His friends were increasingly aware that, unless he did call to his aid the power that must be his as the Messiah, his enemies were bound to triumph. And there has strayed into the tradition the little comment that when in this crisis the genius of Jesus impelled him to go up to Jerusalem to the feast — a desperate course of action under the circumstances — his disciples followed in perplexity, and *as they followed, they were afraid.*

His Triumphal Entry, which in point of fact was not an entry, must have been the climax of their disappointment. As likely as not, it brought about the final downfall of the spiritually weakest of them. Here was Jesus, whom they were convinced was the Messiah, deliberately turning aside from an outburst of popular enthusiasm caused by the same conviction, which he should have welcomed in the crowd. The very circumstances made it seem the fulfillment of prophecy, and his disciples must have been convinced that if he did not act upon it then he was inexplicably obtuse. Jesus himself must have thought much the same. He would seem to have allowed prophecy to fulfill itself up to a point, but in his heart of hearts, as he rode under the triumphal palms upon the ass, over the way strewn with the outer clothes of his followers, the old conflict was staging itself again. His genius knew that this was no acceptance of his spiritual teaching. But was his spiritual teaching after all of primary concern? He knew it to be, and yet . . . and yet . . . While the hosannas dinned in his ears, he must have been hardly less tempted than he had been in the wilderness. But he could

not doubt the will of his Father, however inexplicable that will might be. It was not his Father's will that he should sweep triumphantly through the gate. Somewhere, somehow or other, he slipped off his ass and let the crowd, which already hardly knew whom it was cheering, go on without him. He sat down on a stone and wept over the city. His tears must have been a mystery of mysteries to his disciples. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children . . . and ye would not!* he said in their hearing. "But," they must have muttered to themselves, "not a moment ago the crowd would have taken him to their heart, and it was *he* who would not!"

If there is so little which can be historically affirmed of the events of Christ's ministry, there is also only this little which can be conjectured of it. We moderns have to set aside the theological rigmarole that he knew that he was the Lamb of God about to die, and that, while he was sure that he was the Messiah, he was aware that the Messianic kingdom was a dream to be only spiritually fulfilled. If he had known this, there can be no earthly reason why he did not tell his disciples so in plain language. Had he

done so, it is absurd to suppose that they could not have been made to understand. So that the Church has to suppose, either, on the one hand, that he told them mystically, and that they were so incredibly dense, although a picked band upon which he was to build the new kingdom, that they did not understand, or, on the other, that he did not wish them to understand. Traces of this muddle are many in the Gospels. To such difficulties does the basic mistake of Saint Paul bring us, and from such we can turn away with relief.

It is much simpler to suppose that, humanly, Jesus did think that he was the Messiah, and that his disciples thought so too. But he was a spiritual genius of the first order. His spirit would not allow him to take any course alien to it, obvious though such a course might seem to the backward ideas of his time. But he could not escape the impulse; though a genius, he was still human. The realization of the one and the impulse of the other created a conflict within him — and must have brought despair into the hearts of those who loved him most.

VI. The Betrayal and Death

One of these was Judas Iscariot. Judas was probably the most practical of his disciples, for he was the one who had been given charge of the common purse, and certainly administered for the little company whatever practical affairs it had. He was also a logical man, and, both as practical and as logical, Jesus caused him of them all the most anxiety. We get a glimpse of that anxiety in the traditional story of the breaking of the very precious alabastron of ointment. For he not unnaturally saw the illogicalness of praising such an act while urging in the next breath the selling of all things and the giving of the money to the poor. And if to Judas the chief priests came asking for information which would make convenient the arrest of his Master, it was exactly a Judas who would have looked upon the thing as a heaven-sent opportunity. Inexplicably, the Master could not make up his mind. Very possibly he might be waiting for a crisis which should make it up for him — just such a crisis as the midnight loneliness of Gethsemane in the presence of an armed band would afford him. He may even

have thought the taking of the thirty pieces of silver to be in the nature of a good joke. In the Old Testament the Israelites had been commended for spoiling the Egyptians, and this was a parallel case.

There is an extraordinarily pathetic beauty in the story as it unfolds, if such was the case. Jesus would have been a blind man — which he emphatically was not — if he had not seen the marks of his disciple's action in his face as the crisis approached. If it was in reality a Jewish custom for the master of a feast to give a choice morsel, or a crust dipped in wine, to the most favored of his guests, then what intense drama attaches to the scene of the last common meal, when Jesus, knowing what was going forward, dipped a sop and gave it to Judas! It is even conceivable that in a sense he was not unsympathetic. This may have been the real cause of his intense agony and prayer a few hours later under the old olive trees in the light of the paschal moon. Knowing that the armed band was on its way to arrest him and that this was indeed the climax, he confidently appeals to the Father to vindicate the Messiah. This is the hour at long last. He has obeyed his spiritual

genius until obedience has brought him to this, and now the Messiahship must be declared or lost. But still there is no answer. What! he exclaimed in an agony. Was the Father's will still inflexible? And was there to be no sign? Long he wrestled with the question, till *his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* But his genius was inflexible, and he schooled in obedience to it. *Not my will, but thine be done.* The torches flickered under the trees, and Jesus was a prisoner.

Five minutes later the bitterness of that conflict rings in his own words. "Do you think," he demanded, "that I could not at a word summon twelve legions of angels?" "Why, then," must have echoed in his despairing disciples' hearts, "do you not speak that word?" Jesus himself could scarcely have given an answer. He may still have believed that it was but postponed; it is much more likely that he only knew the inflexibility of his Father's will, of his own spiritual genius, in a kind of despair.

But, if so, there were that night two scenes of despair that were strangely contrasting. Judas rushed off to the Temple, flung down the thirty pieces of silver, and went and hanged him-

self. Jesus stood erect and nearly silent while he was mocked and scourged and condemned. Perhaps he spoke once or twice, and, if so, those traditional words show again the conflict in his heart. Silent before the high priest, when he was adjured *by the living God* to say whether or no he was really the Messiah, he frankly admitted it in words which seem to mean: "I know as well as you do that it does not look like it, with me in this pass, but it must be that you shall yet see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." And while at first Pilate also marvels at his silence, the Roman at length forces out of him the whole admission. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and has nothing to do with his present plight. There spoke his genius; but the logical Roman knew his Jew. "Are you Messiah, then?" he asks practically. "Yes, I am," Jesus is bound to say. *To this end was I born. . . . Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.* Pilate stared at him in bewilderment. The doctrine of the spiritual kingdom was extravagant, but sane; the Jewish expectation of Messiah was neither. Finally he shrugged his shoulders. "What is truth?" he asks wearily.

And it may be that this is the real explanation of that dread climax from which even now we shrink with horror. Up to the very last death agony Jesus could not believe that this genius of his, which he called the Father within him, had played him false. Up to the last moment he had obeyed this inflexible will, and up to the last moment, humanly thinking himself the Messiah, he expected the guidance or the vindication that never came. In parable, the cry that was now wrenched from his lips rent the veil of the Temple from top to bottom, and in very truth has rent in its anguish the hearts of all men ever since. *My God, my God,* he cried, *why hast thou forsaken me?*

And yet that was not to be all. The genius of Jesus never deserted him. It could never be tempted aside, and not even death could shake it. It is as if in the actual moment of dissolution he came back once more to the conviction that the motive power of his whole life had not been wrong. He turns from the God of the Old Testament, and from the God of his human judgments, to the Father whom he had discovered within him in the lanes of Galilee while still a boy. *Father,* he breathed as he passed,

into thy hands I commend my spirit. In the last round of the temptation conflict he had won.

VII. The Resurrection

There is very little more that needs saying, because if anything is obvious it is this — that in the popular imagination Jesus could not remain dead; he must rise from the dead. If he did not, then indeed were all hopes dashed to the ground in the hearts of his disciples who had believed on him, and then indeed, for the only time in history, would the popular imagination amazingly have failed.

It was known all over Palestine by the common people that Jesus had raised the dead and performed every astonishing miracle related of the Old Testament prophets. Tens of thousands who had never seen him knew all this of him, and thousands would have related the story that he was still alive and appearing to his friends, long before any authentic rumor at all had gone forth. Resurrection from the dead was no uncommon thing in that forgotten world of the first century A.D. Every Gentile knew a score of such stories, from that of Persephone onwards. Every Jew had heard the fable of

Jonah, to say nothing of other resurrections from the dead in the Old Testament. Besides, could he who had delivered Lazarus from the power of death himself be holden by it? Popular rumor would never have allowed Jesus to remain dead.

That it was a popular rumor is pretty well evidenced by Saint Paul and by the Gospels themselves. It is extraordinarily interesting how lightly, in a sense, Saint Paul dismisses our difficulty, saying, as it were with a wave of his hand: "Everybody knows that Jesus rose from the dead. How he appeared first to Peter. How he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part are still alive." And so on. But the interesting thing is that none of the Evangelists know these stories. When Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John sat down to write, with the documents in front of them and a thousand rumors in their ears, they did not know what to select. "Q" said nothing at all of the Resurrection. If the early Mark said anything, we do not know what it was — apparently only that there had been an apparition of an angel at the cemetery, and that visiting women had fled away from it

because they were afraid. But that broad story had already been embroidered by a score of popular traditions. Saint Paul had already taught, and the Church had accepted, that Jesus had meant to die, that he had come into the world to die, and that on the cross he had saved men from their sins. The death was but part of a plan. On his Father's throne he now waited to receive the elect, and was very shortly returning *with power and great glory*. An exact account of his resurrection was not even of very much moment. They did the best they could. We may be grateful that they had no opportunity to talk it over together and agree to tell the same story.

But this is not all. A good many of us feel that a wide field for speculation still remains. We need not write ourselves down as convinced spiritualists if we feel, with the late Professor Flammarion, that the evidence collected by such men as F. W. H. Myers and Edmund Gurney and others shows that there is a great deal more to be said for apparitions, of the living as well as of the dead, than was believed possible a century ago. Explain them how you will, the fact of them is extraordinarily attested, and much

more undeniably than men in the street, who neglect the evidence on a priori assumptions, suppose. For our part, we should have been surprised if the friends of Jesus had not seen some surprising apparition after the Crucifixion. It happens too often in the case of ordinary people for it to be very unlikely that it happened in the case of a man like Jesus or that it was believed in by men like his disciples. Once again, if Jesus had not been reported as risen from the dead, it would have been an astounding thing.

Before the Gospels were written, Saint Paul had already done the rest. He, too, could not believe that Jesus was not the Messiah, or that the Messiah could have perished so hideously. It may have been that the fact that he was born in Tarsus, a city anciently noted for its worship of Mithra, and that he himself was more than half a Gentile in thought, as is evidenced by his glory in his Roman citizenship, gave him more than a little expectation of a divine victim to build upon. At any rate, he saw him in Jesus. And he thought he saw Jesus on the Damascus road, and that was enough for him. The Gentile world was already more than prepared for such a conviction; we may even say that

there were many thousands who already held a similar belief before the Church was launched. And thus the story of Christianity has followed upon the history of the Great Galilean.

EPILOGUE

It was not later than five o'clock in the early hours of the morning on which I finished this book. The moon was in the zenith. She shone there, a scarcely diminished disc, so brightly that the palms about the fountain in the open patio still threw hard shadows on the white coral gravel. Over the great bay, two stars held dominion in the arc of sky, gleaming with that concentrated, intense radiance that is so different from the moonlight. They were both reflected in the motionless water, but the farther was low enough to trace a clear shaft of light from shore to shore. Right opposite, the mountains climbed gently but resolutely their five thousand feet into the night, and on their summits were lying great masses of cloud. To all appearance, the mountains might have been snow-capped, and in that event it would have been impossible to say where cloud began or snow ended. The air was clear and cool, yet not

cold enough for me to be otherwise than refreshed as I stood there in my *pareu*.

Even as I watched, Easter Morning dawned. Suddenly, as it were, a still small voice — the snow-cloud masses were tipped with rose. To a symphony of white and black and gray and diamond, the painter, with one ineffable stroke of the brush, had added color — an edging so perfect that one hardly dared breathe. But it scarcely held for the time it takes to write of it. Even as one watched, the mountains of cloud began to be transfused with red. The color slowly stained the whole mass, until one realized that cloud rested on the tops of the mountains and not snow on their face. Then, as if scarcely content with that miracle, there was in the firmament a multitude of the heavenly host. A thousand scarcely existent but rosy flecks of vapor carried the eye up to the central height, where the stars were withdrawing backward from the immanent Presence and the moon blanched dead white.

The lagoon was now an immense palette, of color no longer needed and of color that was being rapidly taken from it with which to paint the sky. The unused fragments of a thousand

sunrises, as the Polynesians say, were sinking in its depths. From its wide arms and from the distant surf — by a trick of sound, silent, though pillars of water foamed thirty feet high again and again along it as if they leaped for joy — purple and green and blue and gold were being gathered to spread cloths before the coming of the King. Scarcely was one laid when another was flung upon it. It was an effortless prodigality that dumfounded me where I, alone so far as I could tell in all that great bay, stood fast and unafraid to watch the resurrection.

Then, his countenance shining as the sun, he came, that mighty Presence, rising with so incredible a precision, so inviolate a right. Sea and air and land were instantly transfigured. He reached out to touch the crimson and scarlet and salmon of the hibiscus flowers, new each morning, in the hedge before me; he drew out gently each white wing of the sleepy doves on the roof of the big bay window of the study; he penetrated the belt of verdure that stretched away on my right so that the green of coconut palm, pandanus, casuarina, tamanu, burau, mapé, banana, papaia, was each distinct in its own glory as he had ordained. And the rushes

by the river, the creeper on the ground, the coarse grass and the flags of wild ginger, lowly as they are, were not forgotten either. Nor did he leave me longer alone. He called to the fish, and they leaped from the sea; to the scarlet-breasted ricebirds, and a tiny flock flew chattering into the flowering tamanus; to the white tropic birds that rest in the great stark valleys behind my house, and they came swiftly to greet him. A single canoe shot out from the river's mouth, with a man in it, singing.

I turned toward the house, and saw Ilonka. "Christ is risen!" I said.

"He is risen indeed!" she cried instantly, for she is Orthodox. "Alleluia!"

R. K.

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